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ABSTRACT

This report provides an overview of the state of vocational education and training systems in Bulgaria, in the context of the history and the present economic development of the country. The report is organized in nine sections that cover the following topics: (1) political and socioeconomic background information, including economic development, demography, and the labor market; (2) modernization of vocational education and training system, including organization and main features; (3) human resource development of managers and administrators; (4) research on vocational education and training and the labor market; (5) institutions responsible for state policy on vocational education and training; (6) legislation; (7) financing of vocational education and training and continuing vocational training; (8) the contribution of bilateral and multilateral donors to vocational education and training reform; and (9) constraints, challenges, and future needs, among them these key priorities: dissemination of the VETERST pilot school activities, institution-building and training at the regional level, and development of continuing training activities for groups vulnerable to unemployment and social exclusion. The document also contains a list of abbreviations, a bibliography listing 29 references, a glossary defining 14 terms, lists of major organizations in vocational education and training and continuing vocational training, a list of in-depth studies carried out by the Bulgarian National Observatory, a one-page profile of the Bulgarian education system, 20 tables, 7 charts, and a diagram. (KC)

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Report on the vocational education and training system

NATIONAL OBSERVATORY COUNTRY REPORT

Bulgaria

1999

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Modernisation of Vocational Education and Training in Bulgaria

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The National Observatory of Bulgaria is part of a network of similar institutions in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the New Independent States and Mongolia

European Training Foundation

The network was established by the European Training Foundation, an agency of the European Union, which works in the field of vocational education and training in Central and Eastern Europe, the New Independent States and Mongolia, as well as the Mediterranean partner countries and territories. The content of this report is the responsibility of the author. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the European Training Foundation.

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1. Political and socio-economic background information

1.1 Economic developments

In terms of the economic development of Bulgaria, 1998 was a year of fluctuating economic growth in a stable financial environment characterised by an increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a low inflation rate; a decrease in manufacturing output, a negative foreign trade balance, and an insignificant amount of foreign investment. The introduction of the Currency Board in mid-1997 has stabilised the economic system. This stability provides a sound basis for the future long-term improvement of the economic climate and for the attainment of stable economic growth.

1.1.1 Gross domestic product

According to preliminary data, the gross domestic product (GDP) of Bulgaria for 1998 amounted to USD 12,236 million at current prices.

The contributions of the different economic sectors to the gross added value of the economy, as calculated by comparable prices, have not changed substantially compared to 1997. The economy is based on three main sectors: agriculture, which contributes 26.5% of output and the industrial and service sectors which account for 28.2% and 44.6%, respectively. Gross added value produced in the private sector (at current prices) amounts to 63.7% of the added value of the whole economy, compared to 17% in 1991. This is 0.7% higher than the corresponding share in 1997.

Table 1.1 Gross domestic product for the period 1992-1998

	1992*	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998**
GDP (USD billion)	8,605	10,812	9,688	13,106	9,946	10,202	12,236

* *The data for 1992 and 1993 include profits from state holdings.*
** *Preliminary data*

Source: National Statistics Institute

1.1.2 Gross domestic product per capita in purchasing power parity (PPP)

According to data supplied by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the GDP per capita in PPP in 1996 amounted to USD 4,190.

According to current data supplied by the Vienna Institute for Comparative Economic Studies (WIIW) in 1997, the level of GDP per capita in PPP in Bulgaria was USD 3,768, which is 58.5% lower than the average level for the countries in Central and East Europe. Slovenia, the Czech Republic, the

Slovak Republic and Hungary come closest to the average GDP per capita of EU countries, while Bulgaria has the lowest level among the countries in Central and East Europe.

Table 1.2 Gross domestic product per capita in purchasing power parity (PPP) for the period 1992-2005

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	2000	2005
GDP per capita (PPP-USD)	4,098	4,195	4,384	4,335	3,974	3,768	4,238	5,156

Source: Research Reports, No. 243, February 1998, The Vienna Institute for Comparative Economic Studies (WIIW)

GDP for 1998 was 17677.3 billion Levs, a 3.5% increase in the GDP physical weight index compared to 1997. At the same time, the GDP per capita increased from USD 1,227 in 1997 to USD 1,482 in 1998, an increase of 20.8%. However, compared to 1990 and 1995, it has decreased by 22.9% and 4.9%, respectively.

Table 1.3 Gross domestic product for the period 1990-1998

	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998
GDP at current prices in USD, million	16,755	13,106	9,946	10,202	12,236
GDP per capita in USD	1,922	1,559	1,189	1,227	1,484

Source: National Statistics Institute

1.1.3 *Annual average inflation*

1998 was noted for its low inflation rate. The inflation rate in 1998 was 22.3%, compared to 1082.3% in 1997.

Table 1.4 Annual average inflation for the period 1990-1998

	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998
Annual average inflation rate	23.8	62.1	123.6	1,082.3	22.3

Source: National Statistics Institute

The financial stability attained in 1998 and 1999 is the result of low inflation. In the period January-September 1999 (compared to December 1998), inflation was 3.7%.

On 5 July 1999, the Law on the Denomination of Bulgarian Currency – the Leva – came into force. Under this Law, 1000 old Leva are now equal to 1 new Lev.

1.1.4 *Privatisation of state enterprises*

According to the information on cash privatisation submitted to the National Statistics Institute by the Agency for Privatisation, a total of 209 privatisation applications were approved in 1998,

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including 169 for commercial companies. Twenty-five privatisation agreements were concluded, of which 19 were for commercial companies. Some 920 applications were approved by the municipalities and 838 privatisation agreements were concluded. Most of these involved untransformed enterprises and their subsidiaries. Fixed assets totalling BGL 28,000 million, which constitute 4.8% of the fixed assets of state enterprises (BGL 580,000 million), were privatised through cash privatisation in 1998.

Table 1.5 Applications approved and privatisation agreements concluded in 1998

[redacted]	**State property**		**Municipal property**	
	Applications approved	**Agreements concluded**	**Applications approved**	**Agreements concluded**
TOTAL	209	25	920	838
Commercial companies	169	19	32	22
Untransformed enterprises and their subsidiaries	40	6	888	816

Source: Agency for Privatisation

The results of the cash privatisation process fell well below expectations, as only 25% of fixed assets are privatised.

1.1.5 *Changes in economic sectors*

The ongoing processes of privatisation and the restructuring of production make it difficult to have a clear and precise idea of whether new sectors have emerged and to identify the sectors which have declined. It is clear, however, that the role of the private sector is constantly increasing. Nevertheless, data on industrial production output per sector in 1998 indicate a general production decrease of 12.7% compared to 1997. An increase in production output was registered in only 3 of the 19 industrial sectors: transport, where output increased by 13.4%, power generation and utilities, where the increase was 10.1%, and coal, oil and gas production, where it was 0.3%. In all other industrial sectors, production output, in terms of relative prices, was lower than in 1997. The greatest decrease (32%) was registered in Bulgaria's largest industrial sector, the production of refined oil products, and in the leather, fur and shoe industries. Considerable decreases were also registered in the chemical industry (31.0%), timber processing (27.5%) and textile and knitted fabric production (21%).

There have been substantial changes in the structure of production in terms of the ownership of enterprises. In 1998, the share of production by private companies reached 39.4% compared to 33.6% in1997.[1]

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[1] "Bulgaria 98, Socio-economic Development", National Statistics Institute, p. 134

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Table 1.6 Index of the output industrial enterprises by sector for the period 1996-1998

Branches	1996 at 1995=100	1997 at 1995=100	1998 at 1995=100	1998 at 1997=100
TOTAL	105.1	94.6	82.6	87.3
Coal, oil and gas production	105.0	90.7	91.0	100.3
Ore extraction	128.1	123.1	111.1	90.2
Mining of other raw materials	98.7	89.1	73.4	82.4
Food, beverages and tobacco products	101.9	84.3	77.9	92.5
Textile and knitted fabrics	104.4	100.8	79.9	79.3
Tailored products	123.4	122.4	122.4	100.0
Leather, fur and shoe products	111.8	98.2	66.7	67.9
Wood products	98.3	100.4	72.7	72.5
Paper, printing and publishing industry products	91.0	78.5	67.0	85.3
Coke and oil products	112.6	79.5	53.8	67.7
Chemical products	119.5	108.8	74.8	68.8
Rubber and plastic products	95.6	77.8	66.2	85.1
Products from mineral materials	115.4	100.4	83.3	82.9
Ferrous and non-ferrous metals	99.3	107.7	88.0	81.7
Castings, metal products and machines	95.6	97.8	88.0	89.9
Electric machinery, equipment and high-accuracy devices	106.4	90.9	79.4	87.4
Means of transport	94.8	79.8	90.4	113.4
Other products	97.7	79.1	77.4	97.9
Power generation and utilities	101.6	108.3	119.2	110.1

Source: National Statistics Institute

In recent years, the output of construction enterprises has continued to decrease. In 1998, it fell to 74.1% of output in 1995 and to 90.2% of output in 1997.

Output from agricultural production fluctuated during the period 1990-1998. In 1998, it was close to the 1997 level, 4.3% less than in 1990 and 3.6% higher than in 1995. At the same time, the contribution of the private sector to agricultural production output, compared to that of the public sector, also increased significantly. The relative share of private sector output in gross production increased from 31.0% in 1990 to 98.0% in 1998.

In 1998, the gross production of transport enterprises decreased by 7.3%, compared to the previous year, while the output of the communications sector increased by 16.3%.

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1.1.6 *Role of small and medium-sized enterprises*

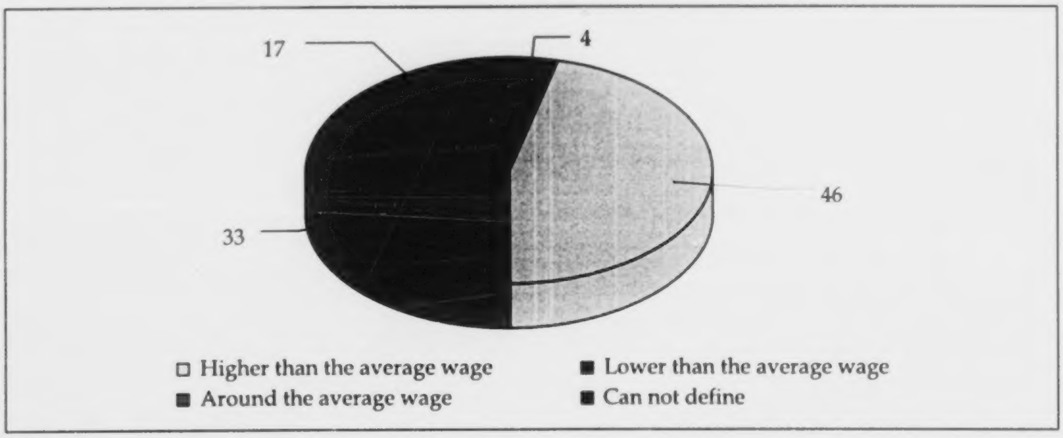
Enterprises in the non-financial sector can be classified, in terms of number of employees: small enterprises, with up to 50 employees (97.4%); medium-sized enterprises, with 50-99 employees (1.2%); and large enterprises, with over 100 employees (1.4%). Practically all small and medium-sized enterprises (98%) are private.

Some 31.8% of those employed in the non-financial sector work in small enterprises, 9.8% are employed in medium-sized enterprises and 58.7% are employed in large enterprises. The turnover per capita in small and medium-sized enterprises amounts to BGL 20 million and BGL 22 million in large enterprises. Although small and medium enterprises have a substantial employment share (41%) in this sector, they are still not efficient enough for current economic conditions.

Data from an ongoing study[2] show that micro-enterprises (with up to five employees) tend to reduce the number of full-time staff they employ once they move out of the start-up period. An opposite trend can be observed in larger companies, which tend to increase the number of full-time employees as they become more established.

The income of employees in private SMEs is higher than the average national income. In 46% of these firms, the monthly salary paid to employees is higher than the average. Half of the manufacturing and construction companies located in the capital pay salaries which are higher than the average for these sectors nationally. The salaries and wages paid by 33% of SMEs are close to the national average and only 17% of the companies pay salaries/wages below the average. The salaries paid in commercial enterprises are lower than in the other sectors, but they are approximately the same as the average national salary.

Chart 1.1 Size of the average monthly wage in private SMEs compared to the average for the country



Source: Ministry of Industry

Private entrepreneurs do not yet consider staff training to be important. Fifty-eight per cent of them do not offer any training to personnel and16% provide only on-the-job training. Only 19% of the firms offer in-house training courses to their staff and 6% offer training in training centres.

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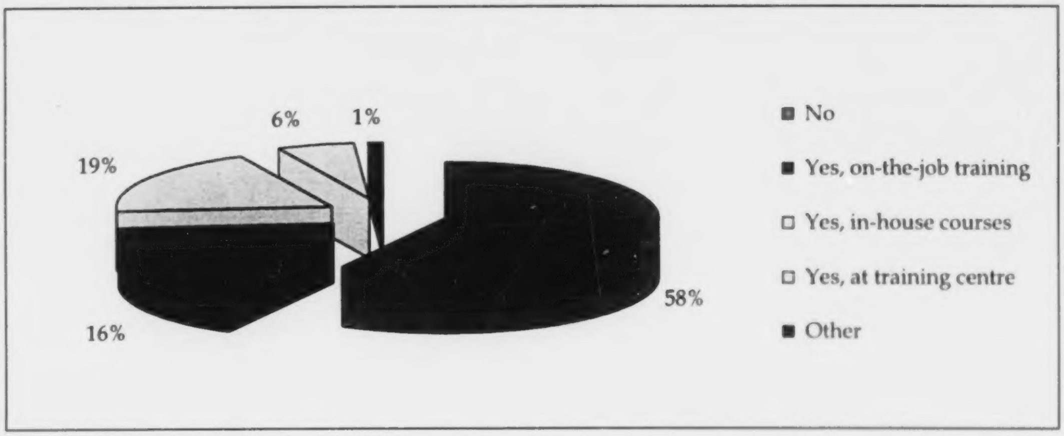
[2] Ministry of Industry, 1998

Chart 1.2 Did/does your company provide any training for its employees?



Source: Ministry of Industry

Data show that the Bulgarian entrepreneur is relatively young and well educated. About 79% of all the entrepreneurs are aged between 20-49 and 52% have had college or university education. Business is still a predominantly male activity. Despite the fact that women represent over 50% of the total population and the majority of the university graduates, there is a significant gender imbalance in business: 74.7% of the managers/owners of private companies are men.

Only 23% of respondents to the survey declared that they do not need any training. The remainder acknowledged their lack of experience and knowledge in the fields of marketing (22%), accounting (18%), modern manufacturing technologies (12%), law (11%), export and import procedures (7%) and banking and financial services (7%).

The survey also indicates that companies face particular problems in the areas of marketing and contacts with clients. These shortcomings have a negative impact on the activities of 54% of all SMEs and of 76% of those in the manufacturing sector. They represent a significant hindrance for 52%. Accounting and administrative problems were identified by 32% of respondents and, for 27% of these, these issues were of major importance. Twenty-eight per cent of respondents indicated that developing business strategies presented difficulties and, for 21%, this is the major problem. Other difficulties include industrial relations (22%), human resource management (21%), company management (18%) and production technology (18%).

1.1.7 Role of self-employment

According to workforce survey data of November 1998, the number of self-employed is 274,000. This represents 9.4% of the total employed in Bulgaria. Compared to 1997, the number of self-employed has decreased by 19,700 or 6.7%.

1.1.8 Role of foreign investment

According to Foreign Investment Agency data, USD 620 million were directly invested by foreign investors in 1998. The total amount of foreign investment for the period 1991–1998 amounts to USD 2,022.9 million, but this level is too low to generate significant changes in economic growth. The rate of foreign investment in Bulgaria is considerably lower than in other countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

1.2 *Regional developments*

At the end of 1998, changes in the administrative and regional structure of Bulgaria were implemented. These created 28 new regions which replaced the existing nine regions. This was quickly followed by the establishment of 28 regional administrations and the appointment of regional governors. Because these changes are so recent, there are no data on regional disparities in socio-economic development.

A most important initiative in the context of regional development was the adoption of Regional Development Act by the National Parliament in March 1999. This law regulates planning and the management and provision of resources. It also provides a framework for the sustained and balanced development of the separate regions within the country, for resolving interregional disparities in employment and income levels and for achieving regional and cross-border cooperation.

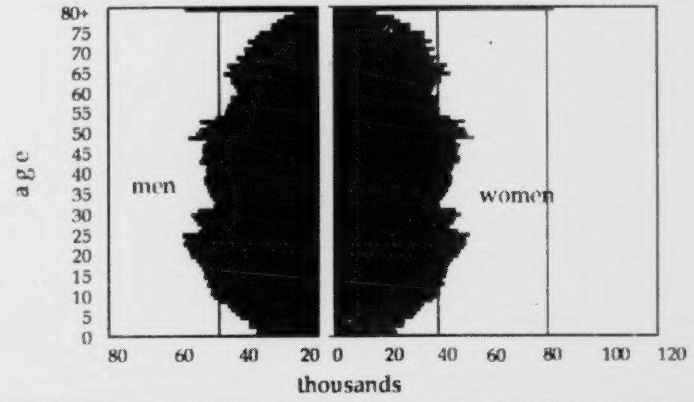
1.3 *Demography*

The most important demographic development in the period 1990-1998 has been the significant decline in the level of reproduction of the population. This has resulted in a substantial decrease in the population of Bulgaria.

1.3.1 *Total population*

According to the National Statistics Institute, the population of Bulgaria was 8,230 million at the end of 1998. As a result to the negative birth/death ratio, the population decreased by nearly 53 thousand (0.6%) in the course of a single year.

Diagram 1.1 Population on 31 December 1998, by sex and age



Source: National Statistics Institute

Women constitute 51.2% of the Bulgarian population and this percentage rises with age. The balance between the two genders, established at the end of 1970, has now changed and, by the end of 1998, there were 1,050 women per 1,000 men.

Compared to 1990, the population has decreased by 439,000.

Table 1.7 Population by gender and age for the period 1990-1998

Years	Total	Men	Women
1990	8,669,269	4,269,998	4,399,271
1995	8,384,715	4,103,368	4,281,347
1996	8,340,936	4,077,501	4,263,435
1997	8,283,200	4,044,965	4,238,235
1998	8,230,371	4,014,071	4,216,300

Source: National Statistics Institute

The population is expected to decrease to 8.1 million by the turn of the century, to 7.6 million by 2010 and to 7.2 million by the year 2020.

1.3.1.1 *Age structure of the population*

There have been significant changes in the age structure of the population in the period 1990-1998. The trend towards an ageing population has continued.

Table 1.8 Structure of the population in Bulgaria for the period 1990-1998

Years	Total	Age		
		Non-economically active age	Economically active age	Post-economically active age
1990	100.0	21.6	55.5	22.9
1995	100.0	19.1	56.6	24.3
1996	100.0	18.6	56.9	24.5
1997	100.0	18.1	57.3	24.6
1998	100.0	17.6	57.7	24.7

Source: National Statistics Institute

According to Bulgarian legislation, the working age is from 15 to 59 for men and 15 to 54 for women.

Compared to 1990, the number of persons in the economically active age groups has decreased by 425,000 and the number of persons classified as post-economically active has increased by 42,000. In the same period, the relative share of the non-economically active age group has decreased from 21.6% to 17.6% and the relative share of the post-economically active age group has increased from 22.9% to 24.7%. These data imply that the young generations that are to replace the current workforce are constantly decreasing in number. At the same time, the share of persons of pension age is increasing. Currently, one person out of four in Bulgaria is of pension age.

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The number of students involved in pre-school, primary and secondary education is heavily dependent on demographic developments in the country in recent decades. The numbers of pupil entering the education system is a direct consequent of the changes in birth rates during this period.

The number and relative share of the population in the 5-14 and 15-24 age groups in the period 1995-2010 are presented in Table 1.9.

Table 1.9 School-age population for the period 1995-2010

	1995	1997	1998	2005	2010
5-14 years (in thousands)	1,073	1,021	993	724	622
Relative share of the total population	12.8	12.3	12.1	9.2	8.2
15-24 years (in thousands)	1,228	1,222	1,214	1,065	918
Relative share of the total population	14.6	14.7	14.7	13.6	12.1

Source: National Statistics Institute

The numbers and relative share of young people in the population influence, not only the number entering the workforce, but also the level of state resources invested in the education system. Mainly as a result of the low birth rate in the recent years, the number and share of young people has decreased. This is shown in Table 1.8. It is estimated that there will be a decrease of 27.1% or 269,000 in the 5-14 age group, and 12.3% or 149,000 in the 15-24 age group, in the period 1998-2005. This means that, over the next eight years, the number of children in the 5-14 age group will decrease at an average annual rate of 38,400.

1.3.2 *Urban and rural population*

The overall decrease affects both the urban and the rural population. In 1998, the urban population continued to decrease, falling to 5,597,000 or 68% of the total population. At the end of 1998, some 2,634,000, 32% of the total population, lived in villages.

1.3.3 *Ethnic profile of the population*

According to data from the last census, which was held in 1992, the population is distributed among the following ethnic groups: Bulgarian 85.7%, Turkish 9.4%, Romany, 3.7%, Tartar 0.1%, Armenian 0.2% and other 1.0%.

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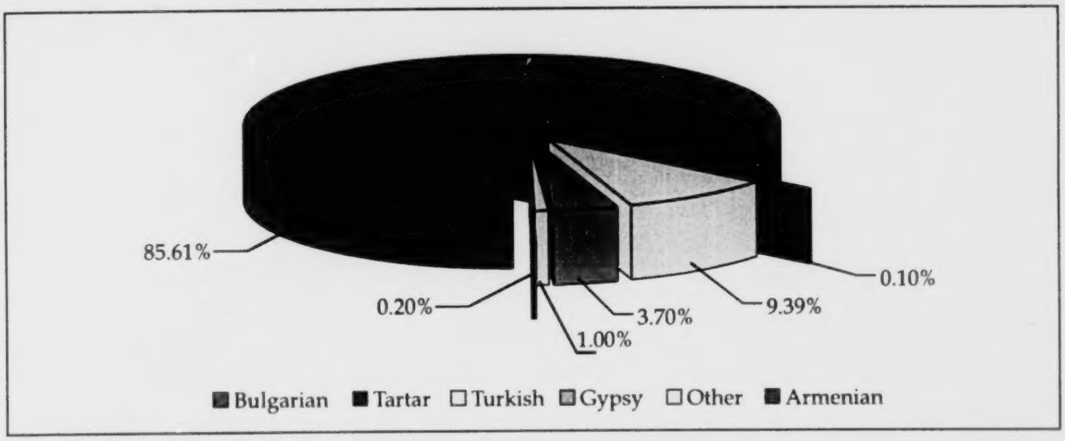
Chart 1.3 Population structure by ethnic group



Source: National Statistics Institute

Most of the Bulgarian and Romany populations are concentrated in towns and cities, while the Turkish population is to be found, primarily, in rural areas.

1.3.4 Languages

The official language in Bulgaria is Bulgarian. People belonging to the various ethnic groups usually speak their native language and Bulgarian. If a person's native language is defined as the language spoken most fluently and used most frequently for family communication, the languages spoken within Bulgaria closely mirror the country's ethnic composition.

According to the last census, which was held in 1992, the structure of population by native language is as follows: Bulgarian - 85.7%, Turkish - 9.6%, Romany - 3.7% and others - 1.0%.

1.4 Social protection and social policy

The system of social protection is being developed as part of the government's programme "Bulgaria 2001". The need for social protection continues to grow at a pace which outstrips the state's financial capacity to support it. This is why the main goal of current reforms is to establish a system which would function efficiently within the limits set by the country's financial resources and Currency Board requirements.

In the area of income policy, efforts have been directed at dealing with the substantial fall in income and consumption levels and ensuring the gradual and continuous growth of real income levels. The level of guaranteed income was raised on several occasions between 1997 and 1998. More particularly, there has been a rise in minimum wages and in payments related to these, i.e., unemployment benefits, allowances for raising children up to the age of two, grants for high school and university students and basic social support income. Guaranteed income was raised by about 22% at the end of 1997 and by a further 16-18% at the end of 1998.

Pensions were increased by an average of 25% in 1997 and 13% in 1998. The normal correlation between the level of pensions and contributions and between maximum and minimum pension levels was restored. This was done by means of gradually decreasing pension benefits so that the levelling out of pensions, which was the previous trend, came to an end.

The main goals of social policy include protecting life, health, the working capacity of workers and employees and securing safe and healthy labour conditions. In keeping with these goals, the Law on Safe and Healthy Labour Conditions was adopted and has been in force since the beginning of 1998. The law regulates the rights and responsibilities of the participants in the labour force. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in co-operation with other institutions involved in labour conditions (the Ministry of Health and the Education and Sports Council), is working on the introduction of comprehensive modern statutory regulations and on synchronising national legislation with European requirements.

Major changes in health care have taken place in recent years and more are expected in the future.

In 1998, a Health Insurance Act was passed and, with it, work began on transforming the system of free health care into a health insurance system. Major changes are being implemented in the health care network. Efforts are concentrated on the prevention of diseases and primary health care.

In the area of social security, policy is now directed at finding solutions to the high cost of the system. The high levels of social security contributions have a negative impact on the labour market. Costs inhibit employers from creating job vacancies and force them to circumvent the law. High social security contributions are needed to cover the large number of pensioners resulting from early retirement (the first and second categories of labour). Under the Bulgarian system, funds are raised from the social security contributions of those who are presently employed and, currently, the contributions of roughly 2.5 million employees are supporting 2.4 million pensioners. This is why the changes in the social security system are aimed at gradually raising the retirement age and at establishing a system based on obligatory, additional supplementary and additional voluntary pension contributions.

Unemployment protection, regulated by the Unemployment Protection and Employment Incentives Act, consists of financial support and support to the unemployed in finding work. Financial aid consists of unemployment benefits and assistance. Only workers who are insured for this risk are entitled to these payments. The size of benefits and eligibility depend on the period of employment and the employees' wages. Among the conditions for receiving such benefits is the requirement that the person has been employed and has paid social security contributions for at least 9 of the previous 15 months.

The law has broadened the range of persons entitled to unemployment benefits and assistance. These are paid out of the Professional Qualifications and Unemployment Fund, which is made up of contributions from employers and employees. The major part of fund's annual budget (55.4%) goes on the payment of unemployment benefits and assistance.

Creating employment has become a priority for Bulgaria. Measures adopted in the sphere of social protection of the unemployed are directed, primarily, at employment. The Council of Ministers has approved measures for the development of regional employment programmes. Regional Employment Councils have been established. As an aid to the operation of these regional councils, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has developed a methodology for drawing up regional employment programmes.

In support of this national priority, the National Council for Professional Qualifications, established by the Unemployment Protection and Employment Incentives Act, has approved a wide range of professions for which training courses, which do not tie participants to specific working places, will be provided. This provision, it is hoped, will give the unemployed a greater chance of finding work.

The draft budget of the Vocational Training and Unemployment Fund for 1999 envisages that expenditure on active measures will increase significantly, i.e., more than twofold, in comparison to 1998.

In the area of social assistance, the most essential steps taken are in the area of improving the procedures used to obtain a precise and objective evaluation of the income and property of people on state benefits. The Law on Social Assistance, which was passed in May 1998, consolidated all assistance programmes into a single framework. Monthly payments to individuals and families with low incomes have been established as a basic and priority form of assistance and are guaranteed by the state. All other types of assistance, such as assistance for heating costs, rent, transport etc. are regarded as supplementary and are targeted either at certain population groups (children, senior citizens, physically disabled persons etc.) or at covering specific needs of assisted persons.

Further consolidation of the programmes will be possible once the Law on Family Assistance and Child Benefits, which has been submitted to the National Assembly, has been adopted and when changes to the Law on the Protection, Rehabilitation and Social Integration of the Physically Disabled have been introduced.

1.5 The labour market

Trends in the development of the labour market reflect recent developments in the economy: the restructuring of sectors and industries, the privatisation of large state-owned enterprises, the closure of inefficient and loss-making enterprises and industries, the decline of traditional activities, and the emergence of new areas of economic activity. These developments have led to a significant restructuring of employment, characterised by increased mobility of workers between different sectors and professions and by changes in the main characteristics of the labour market.

The most general characteristics of the current labour market situation are described in the subsections that follow.

1.5.1 Employment

- ***Since 1996, there has been a clear tendency towards decreasing economic activity among the population.*** The activity rate of the population in 1998 has fallen to 50.4%, which is 1.2% lower than in 1997 and 1.4% lower than in 1996. This tendency is found among both sexes, though men account for 55.6%, and women for 45.6%, of the economically active. The lower rate of economic activity among women is determined by two basic factors: temporary withdrawal from active economic activity to give birth and to rear children; and take-up of the earlier retirement possibilities open to women. The trend towards decreasing economic activity is characteristic of both the rural and the urban population. The decrease in villages, where the rate fell by 2.6%, i.e., from 41.9% to 39.3%, in comparison with 1997, is more marked than in towns where the rate of activity fell by 0.6%. There are some seasonal fluctuations in participation rates and this is explained by the development of seasonal manufacturing activities and industries.
- ***The trend towards a general decrease in employment, which began in 1990, is continuing.*** This trend was interrupted only in 1994 when an increase was registered in comparison to 1993. In 1998, the total number of persons employed in the economy of Bulgaria was 2,920,700, which represents 42.45% of the population aged 15 years and older. The fall in the absolute number of employed persons is paralleled by a drop in the employment/population ratio of 2.3% for the past 2 years, i.e., from 44.7% in 1996 to 42.4% in 1998. This tendency is explained by the continuing stagnation of the economy and the slow pace of development of the private sector, which cannot compensate for the loss of jobs in state-owned enterprises following restructuring and privatisation. The employment/population ratio in towns is 47.6% compared to 31.4% in rural

areas where employment has fallen at a quicker rate, 3.3%, than in towns where the fall in 1997 was 0.8%. This tendency can be explained by the characteristics of employment in rural areas where employment is concentrated, primarily, in farming activities of a seasonal nature and among predominantly older age groups. The drop in the level of employment is not significantly different for men and women. The employment level for men has decreased by 1.8%, to 46.6%, in the period between 1997 and 1998, while that for women has decreased by 1.3%, to 38.45%, in the same period. The lower employment level for women is explained by their lower level of economic activity which was described above.

Table 1.10 *Employment rates by gender and age of the population aged 15 and older*

Age	Employment ratio								
	November 1996			November 1997			November 1998		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total	44.7	49.0	40.7	43.9	48.4	39.7	42.4	46.6	38.4
15-24	21.1	21.7	20.4	20.3	21.2	19.3	20.7	21.4	20.1
25-34	69.9	74.5	65.1	68.7	73.0	64.4	65.3	70.1	60.3
35-44	81.4	82.4	80.5	79.5	80.6	78.4	77.0	78.0	76.1
45-54	76.5	78.4	74.6	75.9	78.2	73.6	71.5	73.6	69.6
55-64	20.1	33.2	8.4	21.4	34.5	9.9	20.3	33.0	9.1
65 and over	2.0	3.1	1.1	0.9	3.3	0.8	1.8	3.0	0.8

Source: Labour Force Survey, National Statistics Institute

- ***There are notable differences in the level of employment between groups with different levels of education.*** Of the total number of employed in 1998, persons with general secondary education continue to predominate (32.1%), followed by those with vocational secondary education (24%). The percentage of employed persons who have primary or lower levels of education remains relatively high (21.7%), though there is a clear tendency towards a fall in the share of employment among this group (- 2.8% in 1998 compared with 1997). On the other hand, there is a tendency towards an increase in the percentage of the employed who have higher education (up by 0.9% for the same period). Despite the tendency for employment to fall, the highest level of employment is found among those with higher education. In 1998, 72.2% of those with higher education were employed. The lowest level of employment is found among those with only primary and lower levels of education (20.7%). For this group, the fall in employment during in the last year was 2.8% compared to 1.8% for persons with higher education. Employment levels for persons with primary or lower levels of education have remained low despite the greater demand for general workers throughout this period. The very low level of employment among women with primary and lower levels of education is especially alarming: only 16% of this group is employed.

- ***There is a continuing tendency towards a decrease in the number of persons employed in the public sector*** (which fell from 93.9% in 1990 to 61.3% in 1997 and to 56.2% in 1998) ***and a corresponding increase in the absolute number and share of persons employed in the private sector.*** This trend is accompanied by an ongoing process of diversification in the forms of employment, e.g., the emergence of groups of employers, self-employed persons and unpaid family workers. However, the pace of development of the private sector and the establishment of

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new opportunities for employment are unable to compensate, to a sufficient degree, for the loss of employment in the public sector. This is the main reason for the fall in the general employment level of the population and the alarmingly high level of unemployment.

Table 1.11 *Employment levels in the public and private sectors*

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Total thousands	4,096	3,466	3,273	3,221	3,241	3,310	3,279	3,030	2,921
Public sector	3,846	3,189	2,662	2,266	2,032	1,924	1,901	1,859	1,641
Private sector	250	277	611	912	1,167	1,348	1,377	1,171	1,279

Source: Labour Force Survey, National Statistics Institute

- ***Active restructuring of sectors of the economy also determines the sectoral restructuring of employment.*** There is a continuing trend towards a fall in industrial employment and an increase in the number and relative share of persons employed in services. During the period between 1996 and 1998, the percentage employed in the services sector has grown from 42.55% to 43.5%. Employment in the agricultural sector has remained relatively stable and high at an average of 23.7%. There are some differences in the sectoral structure of employment in the public and private sectors. In 1998, employment in the farming and forestry branch predominated in the private sector (41.2%). The proportions employed in the different sectors, despite some positive tendencies, are not yet characteristic of developed market economies, which are based on the effective sectoral deployment of the workforce.

- ***There are some contradictory tendencies in the employment rates of the different categories of employed persons – employers, the self-employed, employees and unpaid family workers.*** The share of employees, 86.6% in 1998, continues to predominate in the total number of persons employed. The insignificant growth registered in comparison with 1997 (0.6%) is a result of a decrease in the share of self-employed persons and unpaid family workers. There has also been a slight growth in the group of employers, which was up by 0.4% over the previous year. The reasons behind these differences are varied but the fluctuations can be attributed, mainly, to the effect of existing legal, statutory, financial and tax regulations on the development of independent business, the creation and development of small and medium enterprises, the general development of private business etc.

- ***There is considerable interest in the state of, and trends in, youth employment.*** Young people are an essential part of the total workforce and are of decisive importance for the future prosperity of Bulgaria and its integration into European structures. The main characteristics and trends for this group are summarised below.

  a) In 1998, young persons between the ages of 15 and 24 represented 17.6% of the total population aged 15 and over, 11.3% of the country's workforce and 8.6% of the employed. During the past year, there have been some positive trends with regards to the growth of the percentage of young people in the total workforce and in the total number of employed persons, both having increased by 0.4%.

  b) The employment rates among young people have varied between 21.1% in 1996 to 20.3% in 1997 and 20.7% in 1998.

  c) There has been an increase of 0.8% in the economic activity rate of young people, which rose from 31.6% in 1997 to 32.4% for 1998.

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d) Of the total number of unemployed persons, the share of young people (aged 15 to 24) decreased from 26.1% to 25.4% between 1997 to 1998.

e) The rate of unemployment (36%) among young people remained relatively high in 1997 and 1998. There has also been an increase of 0.7% in unemployment among young men and a corresponding decrease among young women.

f) The relative proportion of employees in the overall employment structure remains high (88.7%) and even increased by 2.7% compared to 1997. There was a significant drop, during 1998, in the share of self-employed (3.4%) and of employers (1.2%). There is a clear tendency towards an increase in the share of unpaid family workers, which rose by 2.0% in 1998 compared to 1997.

Table 1.12 Relative share of youth working in the total working force

Relative share of young people:	**Sept. 93**	**June 94**	**June 95**	**June 96**	**June 97**	**Nov. 97**	**June 98**	**Nov. 98**
In the working population	13.80	12.70	12.00	11.70	10.50	10.90	10.69	11.32
Employed	9.30	9.10	8.80	8.50	8.06	8.18	8.72	8.63
Unemployed	30.50	26.80	29.00	30.20	25.40	26.80	24.77	25.44
Outside the labour market	22.80	23.90	25.10	24.90	26.80	25.05	24.68	24.05

Source: Labour Force Survey, National Statistics Institute

- ***There is a clear imbalance between demand and supply on the labour market.*** The supply of labour is significantly higher than demand and this is the root cause of the high unemployment problem. According to data supplied by the National Employment Service, the number of job vacancies recorded in the Labour Offices in 1998 was 163,000. This is 14% less than in 1997 and is indicative of a further fall in the demand for labour. As of 31 December 1998, the ratio of unemployed to available jobs was 49 to 1. Most of the vacancies offered, 53%, are for persons without professional qualifications, 26.7% are for specialists and 20% are for qualified workers. This data is indicative of another trend: the Labour Office has an over supply of non-prestigious, low-paid jobs most of which offer unattractive working conditions and are limited to certain areas. The demand for labour is characterised by seasonal fluctuations reflecting the sectors, i.e., tourism, agriculture, forestry etc., where vacancies occur.

1.5.2 *Unemployment*

Supply on the labour market reflects the general trends in the economy. Quantitatively, it is significantly higher than demand and, qualitatively, it does not match the new professional and qualification requirements.

- 1998 saw a continuation of the trend towards growing unemployment, which began at the end of 1996. In November 1998, there were 556,100 unemployed persons. This represents 16% of the workforce. The increase in unemployment over 1997 was 1%. The main reason behind this growth in unemployment is the increase in the number of people made redundant by the restructuring of industries, privatisation and the closure of inefficient enterprises and activities.

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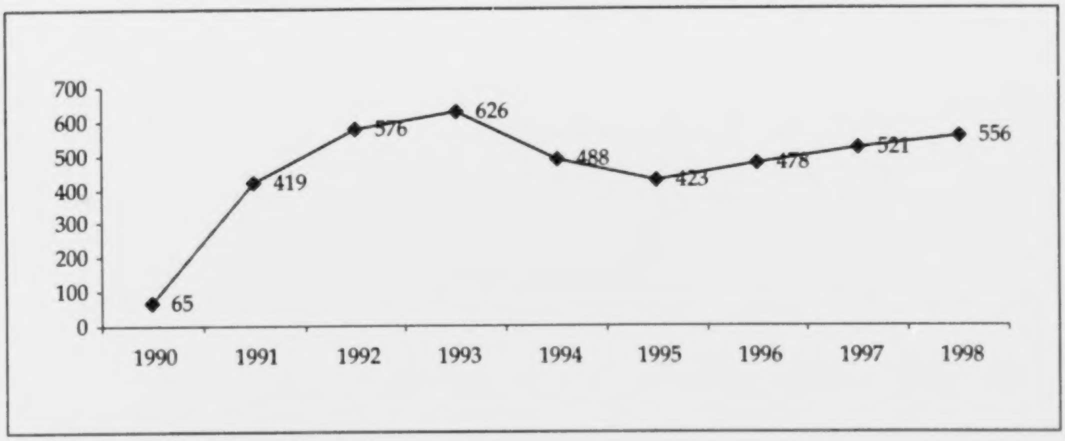
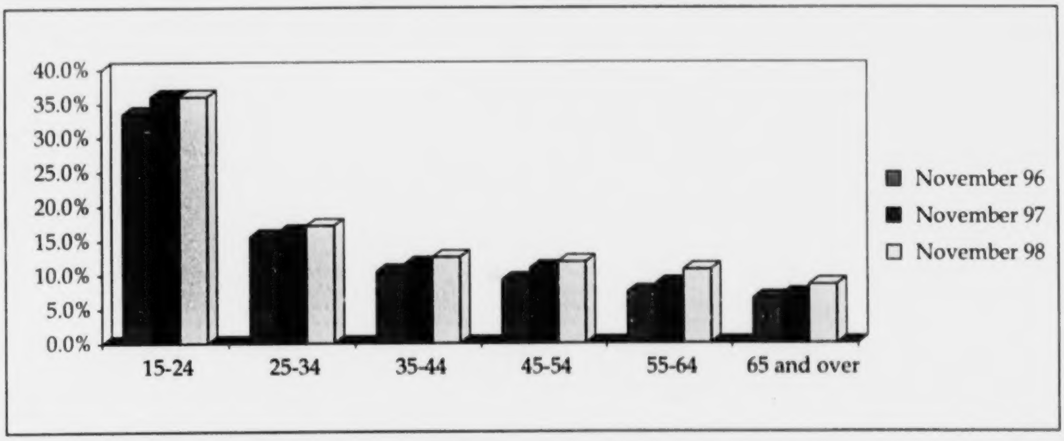
Chart 1.4 Dynamics of unemployment in Bulgaria



Source: Labour Force Survey, National Statistics Institute

- The level of unemployment is higher in the rural areas (villages) where it is 20.1%. This is due, on the one hand, to the nature of employment opportunities there - mainly farming and other seasonal activities - and, on the other, to the fact that the majority of the population in the rural areas has only primary or lower levels of education and this is correlated with higher levels of unemployment. The higher education status and structure of the urban population, as well as the better employment opportunities available, explain the lower level of unemployment registered in towns (14.6%). The rate of growth in unemployment is also higher in villages (0.5%) than in towns.
- There are no marked differences in the levels of unemployment of men (16.1%) and women (15.9%), despite a tendency, during the past year, toward a greater increase in the unemployment rate for men (from 14.7% in 1998 to 16.1% in 1998) in comparison with the increase for women, 0.6% for the same period.
- Youth employment continues to be a serious problem. In 1998, 36% of all young people between the ages of 15 and 24 were unemployed. This is exactly the same level as in 1997 and 3% higher than in 1996.

Chart 1.5 Unemployment by age



Source: Labour Force Survey, National Statistics Institute

The trends in youth unemployment in the various sectors of the economy reflect those found among the unemployed generally:

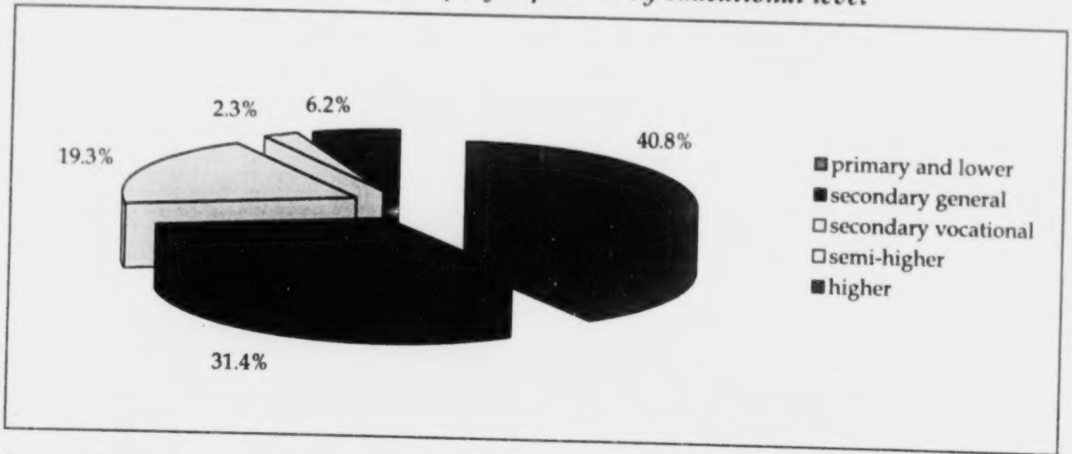
a) the level of unemployment is higher for men (36.8%) than for women (35%); and

b) the unemployment rate is higher for young people living in rural areas (39.1%) than for those living in towns (34.8%).

Growth in youth unemployment is higher towards the end of the school year (graduation time) and on completion of military service. This is confirmed by the unemployed themselves in a survey on employment. Twenty-eight point five per cent of the unemployed young people questioned said that, for them, graduation from high school or university was followed by unemployment and 23.8% indicated that completion of obligatory military service left them unemployed. Among the other reasons given were, "release or dismissal from work" (13.2%) and "ending of temporary or seasonal jobs" (13.3%).

- Unemployed persons with primary or lower level education predominate in the general mass of the unemployed. They are the largest group (40.8%) among the unemployed, classified by level of education, followed by those with secondary education (31.4%). However, the relative share of the group with the lowest level of education declined in 1998 compared to 1997. There are several reasons for this: the demand on the labour market, which continues to be, primarily, for persons without qualifications (and, therefore, with a low level of education); and the retirement of a certain proportion of persons with limited education. Despite this, the level of unemployment among persons with primary or lower levels of education remains high (26.4%) in comparison with that of other groups and increased by 3.7% between 1997 and 1998. The level of unemployment is significantly lower for groups with higher levels of education. The rate is 15.7% for persons with general secondary education, 13.3% for persons with vocational secondary education and 6.7% for those with higher education.

Chart 1.6 Unemployed persons by educational level

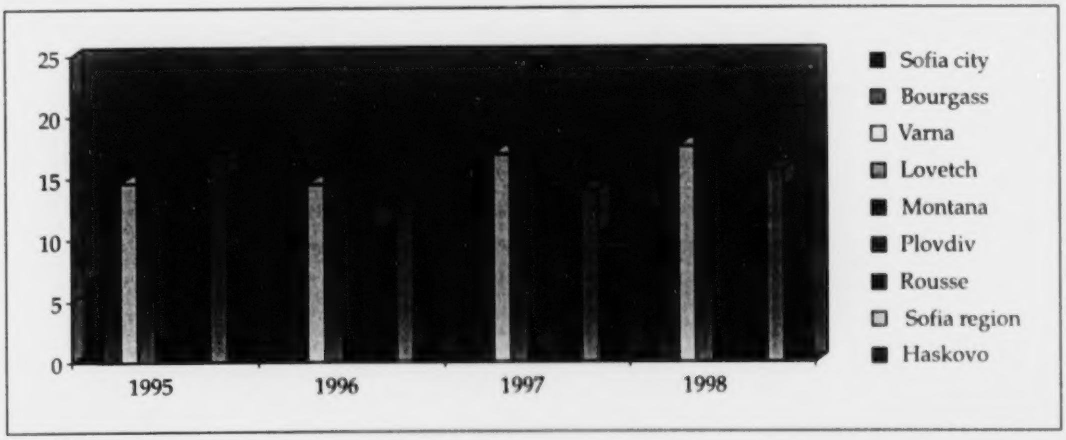


Source: Labour Force Survey, National Statistics Institute

Although all groups have been affected by the general increase in the level of unemployment, unemployment is highest among the group with primary or lower levels of education. Their low competitiveness on the labour market means that these represent the bulk (44.8%) of the long-term unemployed, i.e., those unemployed for one year or more. The long-term unemployed are composed of 55.1% of all unemployed men and 53.6% of all unemployed women. Those aged between 25 and 34 constitute the largest share (26.4%) of the long-term unemployed. The next largest group (24.2%) is those aged between 35 and 44, followed by those between 45 and 54 years of age, which constitute 23.4%. The high relative share of the long-term unemployed (54.4%) among the general mass of unemployed persons underlines the need to adopt a number of permanent measures to tackle this problem. These could aim at limiting the causes of long-term unemployment by maintaining the competitiveness of redundant employees and limiting the length of unemployment, on the one hand, and by offering incentives to employers to recruit persons from among the long-term unemployed, on the other.

- The main reason given for unemployment is redundancy and release from work (53.1%), even though the importance of this factor has decreased since 1997 (55.8%). The second most important reason is completion of seasonal work. This accounted for 14.4% of unemployment in 1998. The predominance of employment in farming activities, which are highly seasonal, is the reason for the greater share of unemployment for this reason in villages (18.5%) compared to towns (12.6%).
- There are some significant differences in the level of unemployment in the regions. During 1999, unemployment varied between 9.3% in Sofia and 23.6% in the district of Montana. Montana is also the district which has the largest share of long-term unemployed persons (65.7%). At the same time, in 1997-1998, Montana was one of only two districts where a decrease in the level of unemployment (0.5%) was observed. The other was Plovdiv, where unemployment decreased by 1.1%. All other regions registered increases, of varying levels, in unemployment.

Chart 1.7 Level of unemployment by region



Source: *Labour Force Survey, National Statistics Institute*

- According to data supplied by the National Employment Service, 62.3% of the unemployed registered at the Labour Offices have no profession, and 89.5% of these have only primary or lower levels of education. This, together with their low level of competitiveness on the labour market, makes it far more difficult to find work for them than for other groups. It also means that this group is at greater risk and is the main source of long-term unemployment. Twenty-two point seven per cent of the registered unemployed are manual workers while 14.9% are skilled workers or professionals. People from the engineering and technical professions make up 48% of the unemployed in the professional and technical categories, followed by economists, at 19.8%, and agricultural specialists, at 12.1%. In general, the level of unemployment among specialists reflects the level of their employment in the economy.

1.5.3 *Employment policy*

A comprehensive labour market policy includes a number of active and passive measures carried out in co-ordination with the social partners and implemented with the active participation of local government. The state labour market policy is oriented, primarily, towards: maintaining the level of employment and decreasing unemployment; decreasing the length of unemployment; the social integration of groups at risk and of groups who have a disadvantaged position on the labour market; raising the quality of employment; and maintaining a reasonable capacity to create employment and to ensure the adaptability and mobility of the national workforce.

The ***passive measures*** related to social protection for the unemployed include the following cash benefits:

- unemployment benefits, to which 23.3% of those registered as unemployed at the Labour Offices in December 1998 were entitled;
- assistance to the long-term unemployed; and
- special purpose allowances, which are paid in addition to unemployment benefits and assistance.

Although the tendency is for expenditure on these types of measures, as a proportion of the Professional Qualifications and Unemployment Fund, to decrease, it is still quite high.

The various ***active measures*** adopted are directed at:

- improving active participation in the labour market;
- improving the professional skills and qualities of the unemployed and those seeking work;
- supporting the creation and maintenance of employment; and
- encouraging the employment of certain target groups among the unemployed.

These measures include:

- the provision of employment services;
- the provision of training and retraining, including professional advice, counselling, and information;
- measures directed at disadvantaged groups in the workforce (young people, the physically disabled, orphans, the long-term unemployed, ethnic minority groups, former convicts etc.); and
- subsidised employment.

There is a clear trend towards increasing the share of available resources devoted to active policy measures. This has grown from 27.6% in 1997 to 31.2% in 1998, i.e., by 3.6%. This increased share of expenditure does not, however, indicate that active and effective preventive policies are being carried out. Many of the active policy measures adopted are not being implemented or have only a limited effect.

The active policy measures and programmes for stimulating employment are directed, primarily, at the disadvantaged or at employers and are considered to be an important instrument for reducing tension on the labour market.

According to data supplied by the National Employment Service, up to November 1998, 66,065 unemployed persons were included in these programmes and measures, 24% less than in 1997. This decrease is the result of a number of restrictions imposed by the international institutions after the establishment of the Currency Board in Bulgaria. At the same time, expenditure by the Vocational Training and Unemployment Fund is 22.6% higher in 1998 than in 1997.

The measures being taken to stimulate employment and provide assistance for job creation.

National programme for temporary employment

This secures employment for unemployed persons for up to 5 months during which they work for the benefit of the community. The programme is implemented in all municipalities and the distribution of jobs is based on a quota system. A total of 21,959 jobs were created for 53,486 unemployed persons in 1998. The programme is financed by the Professional Qualifications and Unemployment Fund.

Programme on temporary employment during the winter months (November-March)

This secures temporary employment by providing additional jobs in areas of activity deemed beneficial to the community and is primarily aimed at disadvantaged groups among the unemployed: persons receiving social support from municipal offices; those registered as unemployed for over 6 months; those with low or limited working capacity; and those with no work experience. The programme is implemented in all municipalities and is based on a quota system. In the period between November 1997 and March 1998, 12,263 jobs were provided for a five-month employment periods for 18,431 unemployed people. In the period between November 1998 and March 1999, 15,000 places were created. The programme is financed by the Professional Qualifications and Unemployment Fund.

Programme on securing employment through employment associations

This secures temporary and alternative employment for up to 24 months. It is implemented in regions, industries and economic activities undergoing restructuring and can be utilised by businesses whose privatisation has been approved and is being prepared and in the implementation of projects and activities deemed beneficial to the community. In 1997, the programme was implemented through 4 employment associations and provided employment for 799 unemployed persons. In 1998, five new employment associations were added and the total number of persons working under it reached 953. The programme is financed by the Vocational Training and Unemployment Fund and has received technical support from Germany.

Programme "From Social Care to Employment"

This is aimed at providing support for those on the margins of the labour market, motivating people in their search for jobs, providing vocational training and helping to place people in work. It is directed at unemployed persons who are receiving social support or who are in danger of becoming socially dependent, i.e., single mothers etc. It is implemented by the Labour Offices throughout the country. Up to November 1998, 3,588 unemployed persons were included in the programme and 2,350 of these have begun work while 69 have undergone vocational training.

Programme for literacy, training and employment

This is intended for unemployed persons living in regions with an ethnically mixed population and aims at improving the capacity/skills of the unemployed by offering general literacy classes, vocational training and help in securing proper employment. The programme is financed by the Professional Qualifications and Unemployment Fund.

Over an eleven months period in 1997, 3,418 unemployed persons were included in this employment measure and, for the same period in 1998, the figure was 2,340.

Programme for the support and stimulation of business initiatives

This consists of establishing centres for business consultations in 3 towns. The centres offer advice to the unemployed intending to start their own business.

Programmes for alternative employment in the restructuring of the defence industry

The finance for this programme is provided by the Ministry of Defence.

Programme for alternative employment in steel and coal extracting regions

In addition to these programmes, various independent measures to provide incentives for the unemployed and employers have been introduced.

For the unemployed these include:

- the possibility of receiving all the unemployment benefits due to them in a lump sum, thereby allowing them to start their own businesses, as well as receiving the professional training necessary for starting up; and
- support for finding a job in another region.

For employers, there are incentives to recruit young people, persons with low working capabilities, the long-term unemployed and other disadvantaged groups.

The specialised vocational training programmes, which are being implemented to maintain the competitiveness of the workforce on the labour market and to provide support in job placement are listed below.

Programme for integrating former prisoners through vocational training and qualification

This programme aims at organising vocational training courses for prisoners while they are still serving their sentences. This creates better prospects for future employment and social integration after their release from prison.

Vocational training programme for military personnel likely to be made redundant

Here, the main goal is to organise courses leading to professional qualifications to aid adaptation to the labour market, including self-employment.

Two further programmes, which are intended to provide support to groups of young people at risk, are being developed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Education and Science.

Programme to provide job placement support to high school graduates from Children's and Adolescents' Homes

Programme to help dropouts to return to school and vocational training and to support them back into the education system

Rules have been approved for the development of national, branch and regional employment programmes to assist the implementation of structural reform. Regional, district and municipal councils have also been established. These are broadly representative and include members from the regional and municipal administrations, the Regional Employment Service, the Labour Offices, the regional structures of the national employer organisations, the regional structures of the national workers' and employees' organisations, the Agriculture Fund, statistics offices, business centres, employment associations, teaching institutions etc.

A number of specialised programmes are being implemented with the financial support of international institutions and within the framework of bilateral agreements with the aim of preserving and stimulating employment and of maintaining the employment capacity of the workforce.

Programme for providing economic opportunities for women in the region of the town of Devin

This includes the establishment of a business centre for women in co-operation with the UNDP. A Guarantee Micro-credit Fund has been established for financing business projects.

"Start your Own Business" programme

This is intended for training and financial support for the successful start-up of businesses by unemployed persons.

Project to overcome the social consequences of structural reform in the steel and mining industry in the regions of Pernik, Sofia, and Bourgas.

The funds for this project will come from the pre-accession funds of the European Union.

The "Quick Start" programme of vocational training

This programme, which is being implemented in co-operation with the American Agency for International Development and the US Department of Labour, is intended to secure employment through offering vocational training closely linked with the actual needs and requirements of employers.

Regional Initiatives Fund

This was established by a loan from the World Bank. The fund's resources are used for financing regional projects aimed at decreasing the negative impact of structural reform by providing temporary employment, improving the economic and social infrastructure and creating a favourable environment for investment and economic growth.

"Beautiful Bulgaria"

This programme is intended to create temporary employment and vocational training for unemployed persons. The programme is being implemented in five regions of Bulgaria.

2. Modernisation of the vocational education and training system

2.1 *Organisation of education and training*

The education system in Bulgaria provides for the acquisition of a general background in human knowledge and lays foundation for continuing education.

According to the 1991 Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, "the State encourages education by establishing and financing schools to help pupils and students acquire skills, establishes conditions for vocational training and retraining and exercises control over all types of schools and the different levels of school education".

The national system of education includes pre-school, first and second stage secondary education and higher education.

According to the Public Education Act passed in 1991 and amended in 1999, general education includes:

- first stage basic education (4 years);
- second stage lower secondary education (4 years);
- and higher secondary education (4 years).

Vocational education and training is also part of this structure.

2.1.1 *Diagram of the overall education system*

A diagram illustrating Bulgarian educational system is annexed to this report. (see Annex 1)

2.1.2 *General education*

The system tries to ensure the acquisition of a general education as well as knowledge and skills corresponding to the interests and individual aptitudes of school children.

There are two types of education: general and secondary.

General education is compulsory and comprises two phases:

- first stage basic education for a four-year period (from grades 1 to 4 inclusive); and
- second stage basic second stage for a further four-year period (from grades 5 to 8 inclusive).

Progression to second stage basic education is possible only after completion of the 4th grade.

Secondary education comprises one phase – a four-year period from grades 9 to 12.

Children start attending first grade at the age of seven, on the request of parents or guardians. It is possible, following a parental request, for children to start their general education at the age of six, provided they meet the physical and mental development requirements.

School education from 7 up to 16 years of age is compulsory. Not all students graduate successfully from the basic education system.

Completion of primary education is recognised by a certificate which gives pupils the right to continue education at the secondary level. The primary education completion certificate is given only to schoolchildren who have successfully completed 8th grade. If the pupil has reached the age of 16, s/he can go directly onto the labour market or attend any available continuing vocational training courses.

Basic and secondary education are structured as follows:

- junior (from grades 1 to 4);
- middle (from grades 5 to 8),
- primary (from grades 1 to 8); and
- general secondary (from grades 9 to 12).

The general secondary system includes special schools for children suffering from chronic diseases and for children with special educational needs. The curriculum in these schools is adapted to student needs.

Orphans or disadvantaged children are referred to special schools. Such schools follow the general curriculum for first and second stage basic education. After completion of basic second stage (lower secondary) education, pupils obtain a certificate of general education.

The Public Education Act lays down that secondary education is completed after graduation from the 12th grade. Successful graduates must also pass state matriculation examinations in three obligatory subjects – Bulgarian grammar and literature, social science and civic education – and in another subject which can vary according to the syllabus on offer. School children receive a certificate upon completion of secondary education.

There are several types of secondary schools:

- comprehensive schools (grades 1-12), many of which offer vocational training courses;
- general secondary schools (grades 9-12 inclusive); and
- special secondary schools (grades 8-12).

The subjects covered in general secondary schools are:

- Bulgarian grammar and literature;
- foreign languages;
- mathematics, computing, and information technology;
- social sciences and civic education;
- natural sciences and environmental studies;
- arts;
- culture and technology; and
- sports.

The curriculum in special secondary schools covers:

- language training;
- Bulgarian grammar and literature;
- mathematics;
- physics;
- chemistry;
- biology;
- natural sciences;
- history;
- geography;
- philosophy;
- Christian art and culture; and
- art and culture.

Usually, there are entry examinations at a national level for special secondary schools. The contents and the conditions of the examinations are determined by the Ministry of Education and Science. The duration of the course is 4 years after the successful completion of 8th grade or 5 years after the successful completion of 7th grade.

The structure of the curriculum is based on three types of instruction: compulsory, elective and optional.

- Compulsory instruction ensures the acquisition of minimal general education. It includes:
  - Bulgarian grammar and literature;
  - two foreign languages;
  - mathematics;
  - computing studies;
  - technology;
  - history;
  - philosophy and logic;
  - geography and economics;
  - ethics and law;
  - philosophy;
  - pastoral care;
  - physics and astronomy;
  - chemistry and environmental studies;
  - biology;
  - health education;
  - arts; and
  - music.

- Elective subjects provide the opportunity for additional in-depth study in several school subjects drawn from the core curriculum. From 2 to 21 school hours per week for the different grades may be devoted to these subjects. One subject may be the student's native language.
- Optional subjects may be studied for up to 4 school hours per school week for all grades and are not compulsory for all students. These are taught outside compulsory school hours and are selected according to pupils' wishes and education potential.

2.1.3 Vocational education and training

Vocational education and training is provided in a public system aimed at training individuals for employment and other areas of public life by establishing conditions for the acquisition of vocational skills and their continuing upgrading. The system is shaped by changes in the socio-economic situation and by inputs to the development of democratic relations throughout Bulgarian society.

According to the Vocational Education and Training Act, adopted in 1999, the system of vocational education and training includes career guidance, vocational training and vocational education.

- Career guidance provides information, consultation and advice to students, the unemployed and any other persons who need it.
- Vocational training ensures the acquisition of qualifications for a job or part thereof, as well as the upgrading of those qualifications.
- Vocational education ensures the acquisition of a minimal level of general education, which gives the student access to secondary education, and of the qualifications necessary to take up work in a specific occupation.

The system is directed at providing vocational education and training at a number of levels.

- *The acquisition of vocational qualifications and secondary education.*

  The period of study is four years after completion of primary education and five years after the successful completion of 7th grade. Schools can determine the conditions for entry and the types of entrance examinations they set. The contents and the conditions for conducting the entrance examination are determined by the Ministry of Education and Science.
- *The acquisition of vocational qualifications after the completion of secondary education.*
- *The acquisition of vocational qualifications after completion of the 6th grade, in parallel with the completion of primary education.*
- *The acquisition of vocational qualifications only after completion of primary education.*

The number of students in vocational education and training witnin the school system in the 1998/99 school year was 195,851.

Graduates from professional gymnasiums and technical schools have the right to exercise the occupation in which they have been trained or to continue their education in the system of higher education.

Vocational schools organise and conduct courses in vocational training for the unemployed and the employed in compliance with rules laid down by the Ministry of Education and Science. The graduates of these courses are issued with vocational qualification certificates.

2.1.4 *Post-secondary vocational education and training*

Post-secondary vocational education and training is regulated by the Vocational Education and Training Act and the Higher Education Act.

2.1.4.1 *Rules laid down in the Vocational Education and Training Act*

Vocational education after the completion of secondary education provides for the acquisition of vocational skills in a broad range of occupational areas, including the organisation and management of the work of other people.

Training continues over a two-year period and is conducted in vocational colleges or in technical schools and professional gymnasiums. Depending on the method of financing, schools may be state, private, municipal or be supported by foreign participation. Private vocational colleges have been established under the 1991 Public Education Act and its amendment in 1999 and Regulation No 9 of 29.12.1994 of the Ministry of Education and Science on Private Schools and Kindergartens and its amendment in 1997.

The socio-economic situation in the country presents an additional opportunity for ensuring that the constitutional right of each citizen to freely choose the type of schools and form of education s/he wants is respected. Currently, there are 20 private, post-secondary vocational schools operating, mainly, in the areas of services, tourism and banking.

Programmes for post-secondary vocational education are also provided in former technical schools in the following fields: management and marketing; the business and services sector; banking; accountancy and financial services; industry; agriculture; electronics; transport; and custom services. Seventy-nine state and 20 private schools offer two-year programmes in post-secondary vocational education.

The validation and development of post-secondary vocational education reflect the aim of creating effective opportunities for acquiring vocational qualifications which meet both the needs of the labour market and individual interests. Recent trends in the development of this type of education include: creating the right environment for ensuring good links and relations between training, the requirements of the labour market and individual interests; providing opportunities for effective post-secondary education; and ensuring the effective utilisation of the resources available.

The main objectives of these vocational schools are:

- to provide vocational training for people who have graduated from secondary education;
- to provide vocational training for people who have graduated from secondary education and are working in one of the areas for which training is provided by the educational institution; and
- to provide training and an upgrading of the vocational qualifications of the unemployed in line with the requirements of the National Employment Service.

Training is delivered through regular, extra-mural, or evening courses, distance learning and by correspondence. Under the Labour Code, persons have the right to training leave to pursue off-the-job training.

Upon the completion of training and after having successfully passed examinations, the trainees acquire specific vocational qualifications. Graduates acquire a vocational qualification, attested by a certificate, which gives them the right to work in a certain occupation in the labour market. A certificate of vocational qualification does not, however, give access to the system of higher education. A secondary education diploma is necessary to enter the higher education system.

The number of trainees in vocational colleges in the 1998/99 school year was 7,753, of which 4,517 were females.

2.1.4.2 *Vocational education and training under the Higher Education Act of 1995 and its amendment in 1999*

According to the Higher Education Act of 1995 and its amendment in 1999, professional education is offered in colleges of higher education, which provide training over a period of three years. These colleges are located within the universities or are independent institutions.

Graduates from colleges within the universities can acquire a "specialist" degree in the following areas:

- medicine (nurses, midwives, dental assistants etc.);
- technical and technological specialisations;
- pedagogical specialisations (kindergarten and primary teachers);
- tourism;
- librarianship;
- telecommunications;
- transport;
- agriculture; and
- economics and management.

2.2 *Main features of the vocational education and training system*

2.2.1 *General characteristics*

- The vocational education and training system in Bulgaria is institutionalised, school-based and offers students the opportunity to acquire parallel basic and secondary education and vocational qualifications that meet the needs of the contemporary economic environment and their own wishes.
- Vocational training is organised and conducted in the Centres for Vocational Training.
- Vocational education is a uniform system where state requirements for education and training are determined at national level. This means that the content of education in all vocational schools of the same type is uniform. The syllabus and curriculum in general education and vocational training are approved by the Ministry of Education and Science and are obligatory for all state and municipal vocational schools. Students may also study optional subjects, whose content is determined and drafted by schools to meet the students' wishes and the specific needs of the regional and local economy.
- The system of vocational education is managed on a national, regional, municipal and school level. Financial management is carried out on a state or municipal level, depending on whether the school is run by the state or a municipality.
- All types of schools and levels of education are subject to state control in accordance with Article 53, Paragraph 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria.

- There is equal access to vocational education for everyone and entry is determined by uniform requirements approved by the state.
- Conditions are provided for continuing education for all individuals through the interaction between school and extra-mural education.
- The establishment, development and function of vocational education and training are based on an attempt to meet the real needs of the regional and local economy. The supply principle, i.e., meeting the interests and wishes of young people involved in training, is paramount.
- The Vocational Education and Training Act has introduced four levels of vocational qualifications.
- The system of vocational or career guidance and information tries to meet the needs of both the unemployed and the employed.

Vocational education and training in Bulgaria provides:

- different levels of vocational qualifications together with the acquisition of primary and secondary general education;
- opportunities to the acquire or improve vocational qualifications in the same or a different vocational field after graduation from primary or secondary education;
- opportunities to acquire vocational qualifications and secondary education, along with intensive foreign language training targeted at specific occupational areas;
- several options for training in different vocational education and training structures, depending on the preferred occupational area, the desired level of vocational qualification and the trainee's level of general secondary education;
- access, on graduation, either to job placement, where one can practice the acquired vocational qualification, or to a higher educational school or university, where one can acquire new vocational qualifications or improve those one already has; and
- the system necessary to provide the motivation for the creation of a civic society.

There are four levels of qualification, as laid down by the Law on Vocational Education and Training.

2.2.2 *Schools, teachers and pupils in the education system*

Vocational education and training is provided at the following institutions:

- vocational schools, offering vocational training within the basic education system and at upper secondary level;
- three-year secondary vocational schools;
- four- and five-year technical schools and professional gymnasiums;
- post-secondary vocational schools; and
- training centres run by the state, regions or companies.

The Labour Offices and the Vocational Centres of the national employment system and private companies organise and conduct courses leading to qualifications for unemployed and employed people. The courses are delivered at training centres, colleges, schools etc.

Schools are state or privately owned.

The number of training places in state vocational schools is decided on the basis of training needs and the financial provisions of the national budget. The Regional Inspectorates of the Ministry of Education and Science, together with the Regional Employment Services and the Municipal Councils, analyse trends in regional economic developments and the network of schools, and decide on the number of training places they will provide in different vocations, taking into consideration existing equipment and facilities and the vocational qualifications of teachers.

Each year, state entrance examinations are determined on the basis of rules approved by the Minister for Education and Science.

Students are accepted on a competitive basis after sitting an entrance examination, or on the basis of a competition or in the order determined by the Pedagogical Council of every school. Different entry requirements apply to secondary vocational-technical schools, technical schools and professional gymnasiums which have a training period of four or five years.

The vocational school network includes 247 technical schools and professional gymnasium, 226 secondary vocational schools, 7 primary vocational schools, and 19 art schools. There are 35 private professional gymnasiums in the areas of agriculture, catering, management, tourism and services. There are 42 colleges in the higher education system.

The distribution of vocational schools in the country is influenced by the primary need to meet local municipal requirements. Some schools are company-run and some are located near the premises of the companies themselves. More than half of the vocational schools are concentrated in regional centres.

Vocational schools are divided, according to their areas of specialisation, into:

- schools providing vocational training in one occupational group (172);
- schools providing vocational training in two occupational groups (186); and
- schools providing vocational training in more than two occupational groups (145).

Current changes in the network are directed at:

- assessing the network's effectiveness in the context of the regional development of the labour market;
- analysing training needs and the number of vocational courses offered, with a view to optimising specialisation in schools and meeting present-day labour market requirements; and
- determining school size, which is influenced by a number of factors and can vary from over time.

The network should be designed with a view to:

- meeting local occupational demand and new skill needs;
- catering for students' personal interests and wishes;
- providing full employment for existing teaching staff;
- making effective use of material and technical facilities; and
- providing quality, modern training.

Practical training is organised in school workshops or in specially organised company placements. Practical training is an integral part of vocational training and it is planned as part of the curriculum. It is conducted weekly and is followed by theoretical training. Training in firms usually lasts several weeks, during which time students do not attend school. This kind of training is also part of the curriculum.

The shortage of financial resources and other obstacles raised by the new economic conditions have made it very difficult to run the practical training programme.

The Vocational Education and Training Act provides for real co-operation between schools and enterprises in the delivery of appropriate practical training. This will forge closer links between schools and industry, ensuring a dialogue on industry needs, skills and qualifications, and will also facilitate the transition from school to work. To date, however, the system has remained almost entirely school-based.

According to the 1998 Protection against Unemployment and Employment Incentives Act, vocational education and training can be provided by all statutory bodies which are engaged in educational or training activities.

Vocational schools that have well-developed manufacturing facilities can supply services to individuals. The development of premises for practical training is financed by resources raised through such activities.

According to the Protection against Unemployment and Employment Incentives Act (1998), vocational training to meet labour market needs can be delivered by companies and organisations which are registered under Bulgarian legislation and whose area of activity includes training and qualification.

Within the employment service, the Regional Centres for training the employed and unemployed are now operational. The services these offer include courses requested by big employers, small and medium-sized enterprises and unemployed people.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the National Employment Service are the institutions responsible for the labour market training of both the unemployed and the employed. Three training centres have been established under a German-Bulgarian co-operation agreement and are managed by the Ministries of Education Science and of Labour and Social Policy.

The content, organisation and financing of in-company training are decided by those enterprises where it is carried out.

Table 2.1 Schools

Schools	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98
General Secondary*	3,538	3,360	3,381 of which 22 are private	3,356 of which 31 are private	3,321 of which 35 are private	3,180 of which 43 are private
Vocational/technical schools, professional gymnasiums, secondary vocational schools, vocational schools	566	494	531 of which 9 are private	553 of which 18 are private	574 of which 27 are private	541 of which 16 are private
Post-secondary vocational schools**						32 of which 12 are private

* *General secondary school figures consist of data for primary, basic and general secondary schools.*

** *For the period 1993–1997, information on post-secondary schools is included in the overall category of vocational schools.*

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2.2.2.1 Teachers in general secondary and vocational schools 9 –11/12 grade

There are 30,593 teachers in the vocational education system. Sixty per cent of these are teachers of general educational subjects and 40% are practical trainers and craftsmen.

Twenty-nine per cent of all teachers teach general school subjects, while 61% teach the theoretical and practical aspects of special vocational subjects. Seventy-six per cent of teachers have a higher education degree, while 22% have a post-secondary qualification and 2% a secondary education.

The ratio of teachers to students in vocational schools is 1:11 and, in general secondary schools, 1:12. For the system of secondary education overall, the ratio is 1:11.

Table 2.2 ***Teachers and students in general secondary and vocational schools (ISCED level 3)***

School years	Vocational schools**			General secondary schools*		
	Teachers	Students	Ratio	Teachers	Students	Ratio
1993/94	18,836	211,235	1:11	11,806	15,1903	1:13
1994/95	18,885	212,401	1:11	12,420	15,8701	1:13
1995/96	19,008	209,286	1:11	12,736	158,968	1:12
1996/97	19,056	203,186	1:11	13,162	153,234	1:12
1997/98	18,446	199,997	1:11	12,147	146,091	1:12

* *Data refer to GSSN 9 – grades 11/12*

** *"Vocational schools" is the generalised term for technical schools, professional gymnasiums and secondary vocational schools.*

The number of students decreases every school year. However, in recent years (except for 97/98), the number of teachers has increased. This is a result of the new facilities for studying introduced in recent years and the increasing number of elective and optional subjects taught.

2.2.3 Quality control and recognition of qualifications

Final testing and assessment in all types of vocational and technical schools is regulated by:

- the Public Education Act, 1991, amended in 1998;
- Regulations on the Application of the Public Education Act, 1999,
- Instruction No 1 for conducting examinations in vocational schools of 12 May, 1993, amended and annexed by a Letter-exit N 06-00-65/07.04.1994; and
- the Vocational Education and Training Act of 1999.

On the completion of training, students receive:

- a certificate of vocational training, if a vocational qualification is acquired;
- a certificate of vocational specialisation;
- a diploma of secondary special education;
- a diploma of secondary education and a certificate of vocational qualification;

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- a post-secondary technical school diploma;
- a certificate conferring the right to exercise a certain occupation; or,
- depending on the selected form of training, a certificate of graduation or a qualification certificate, which attests to the acquisition of vocational knowledge and skills and is valid for access to employment.

Students' knowledge is assessed on the basis of the following scale: excellent (6), very good (5), good (4), average (3) and poor (2). If a student gets a poor mark (2) in one of the subjects studied, a certificate for that subject is not issued an, in order to get one, the student must re-sit the examination. The student has the right to appeal for a higher mark or grade in any subject. Continuous assessment is used in the system of education and this gives students ongoing feedback on their progress.

The procedures for awarding a Leaving Qualification Certificate are based on final theoretical and practical examinations, which are held at the end of training courses, and on the continuous assessment of student skills. A credit system was introduced, on a pilot basis, in the Phare project on upgrading vocational education and training. Such a system is consistent with both continuous or periodic assessment and final examinations. Under the Phare project, a system for evaluation, using a modular approach, was developed for all the occupations covered. A national standard for evaluation is also being prepared.

Current assessment procedures mainly take the form of written or practical tests, aimed at assessing knowledge and skills. The written component is on theory and the examinations include justification of diploma work and practical assessment. The examinations are organised at the school level.

Attempts are being made, on a pilot basis, to find a balance between the assessment of theory and practice. A pilot study on the introduction of evaluation tests during the vocational qualification examination is being carried out by the Institute of Education. Testing covers the following occupations: carpenter, welder, baker, electrician and machine maintenance worker. The Ministry of Education and Science decides on the training programmes and means of assessment (type of assessment, dates of examination etc.) for school-based vocational education. The examinations are organised at the school level and committees, appointed by the school directors, carry them out.

All those involved in the vocational education and training system realise that the participation of social partners is crucial to quality assurance. But Bulgarian employers often find it very difficult to specify and detail, or even sketch out, what exactly they expect from school leavers. At the same time, they are critical of schools for failing to meet the skill needs of industry.

In accordance with the 1991 Act on Public Education, diplomas and certificates of vocational qualifications are currently issued by training organisations validated under the same legislation.

A National Vocational Education and Training Agency is to be established. This would be regulated by the Vocational Education and Training Act and would be responsible for the development of national requirements and unified criteria for state examinations leading to vocational qualifications.

2.3 Adaptation of vocational education and training to labour market and socio-economic changes

2.3.1 General aspects

During the period of transition, the vocational education and training system has to meet the demands for training so as to enable citizens to actively participate in society and economic life and to face the challenges thrown up by recent changes.

Since the break-up of the socio-economic system in 1989, Bulgaria has experienced several years of changes in its institutional, economic and social infrastructures. Vocational and technical education and training are at the crossroads of these developments and have been affected by these changes in various ways.

- The transition from a centrally planned to a market-oriented economy has brought about a period of deep recession, with a decrease in GDP. A lot of enterprises have been closed and the process has provoked severe unemployment and a serious financial crisis. The old vocational education and training system was designed to serve the requirements of a centrally planned economy, with an emphasis on industrial production. The training centres within the big state enterprises have been closed down. Support for vocational schools has been withdrawn and opportunities for providing practical training in enterprises are restricted.
- Co-operation between employers and schools, which is so necessary to a market economy, has been abolished, with vocational schools becoming entirely dependent on the state.
- The economic recession has impacted on the national budget and triggered a shortage of financial resources for education, including vocational and technical education, teacher salaries, teaching materials, curriculum development and new equipment for training workshops.
- New economic realities mean that enterprises have to compete on the market in terms of quality and cost, putting an end to the employment guarantees of the past. Due to socio-economic and technological developments, skill requirements have changed radically and the vocational education and training system has had to respond to the new demands.

There were attempts to introduce changes into Bulgaria's vocational education and training system long before 1989. As a matter of fact, they have been on the agenda of decision-makers since the end of 1980s. These changes concerned the implementation of vocational programmes in comprehensive schools. The effects of the reforms have been more negative than positive. The main reason for this is that reform was implemented in a very directive manner, and that society (teachers, parents, and students) did not understand, accept or support the overall reform policy.

The social and economic transformation which has taken place in the country in recent years requires a new approach to vocational education and training. The process of reforming the school-based vocational system started with the 1991 Public Education Act, which was amended in 1998. On 30 July 1999, the Act on Vocational Education and Training was adopted. The Act laid down the legislative foundations for changes to the structure and content of the system.

Under the Public Education Act, Regional Inspectorates, representing the Ministry of Education and Science, are responsible for the management and monitoring of secondary education, including vocational education. With the amendments of the Act in 1998, the Inspectorates, became legal entities. They are responsible for the control and co-ordination of the education system at regional level. They ensure the implementation of state policy of providing access to schools. The municipalities are responsible for the finance, management and running of schools under their control. Taking on the responsibility for funding, "municipal" vocational schools is a new challenge for municipal authorities.

The Ministry's current policy in the area of vocational education is in line with the priorities of the government and the national strategy for accession to the EU. The new political and socio-economic conditions are determining strategic policy priorities in the area of vocational education and training. Among these are:

- the development of a vocational training system which is relevant to socio-economic demands and is a prerequisite for the promotion of employment on both national and European labour markets;
- the development and consolidation of democratic principles in the organisation and management of vocational education and training; and
- the introduction of institutional changes that will enable the vocational education and training system to help the socially excluded (the disabled, school dropouts, minority groups, the long-term unemployed etc); and
- the development of a system of adult education in line with labour market needs and with the demands and choices of individuals.

In this context, the vocational education and training system is faced with a number of specific tasks:

- the application of market regulations and harmonisation with European legislation (in terms of management, qualifications etc);
- the consolidation and development of social partnership within the system;
- the provision of vocational training relevant to socio-economic demands through the introduction of new, modern, educational courses and new qualifications and through upgrading the curricula to bring them into line with social and technological developments;
- the introduction of a modular approach in curriculum development to achieve greater flexibility in the workforce and to provide greater opportunities for the improvement of qualifications;
- the development of new curricula, which, in terms of content, aims and social orientation, focus on the new skills required by the changes forecast in the economy and in the structure of employment;
- the optimisation of the use of the network of vocational schools;
- the development of a new system to assess and certify skills which will change rapidly with technological development and subsequent changes in the organisation of labour[3], a system that can be established only by active co-operation between the institutions responsible for the implementation of the vocational education and training and the social partners[4]; and
- the creation of conditions for retraining teachers in vocational schools, in line with the new requirements of the labour market and with technological development, and the development of the system for training trainers.

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[3] Traditionally in Bulgaria, assessment is the responsibility of teachers but this will change with the adoption of the Vocational Education and Training Act.

[4] This means that employers, in particular, must be encouraged to take part in the process of assessment and planning of the qualifications.

Recent, targeted reform has brought about the following changes in the area of vocational education and training:

- the Vocational Education and Training Act has been adopted;
- the financial management of vocational education has been decentralised;
- co-operation between the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has been consolidated in order to facilitate joint action in solving the problems of employment, in preventing the social isolation of school leavers without families and in vocational guidance;
- new curricula have been introduced for key occupational areas (management, marketing, environmental protection, banking, trade, social insurance, insurance business, customs agencies etc.) and management training has been introduced in vocational schools that do not offer training in economics;
- national standards for 18 occupations, drawn from 11 occupational groups, have been developed under the Phare programme and have been implemented in 30 vocational schools;
- the List of Occupations for School and Extra-School Training is now updated on a regular basis to meet the challenges of the market economy and student demands;
- a network of private vocational schools has been established offering training in specific areas where demand exists and new curricula for retraining adults (predominantly the unemployed) have been developed; and
- additional training for teachers has been organised in special training centres, training is provided for teachers in foreign languages and for teachers in specific vocational fields and a programme for adult education has been approved.

It is the established policy and practice of the Ministry of Education and Science to eliminate traditional occupational profiles that have become obsolete on the labour market and to introduce training in new areas in line with the requirements of the economy. Special emphasis has been laid on providing better and more in-depth training in economics in vocational schools and in foreign language teaching in technical schools and professional gymnasiums and on the development of entrepreneurship in small and medium-size businesses.

The content of the pilot curricula developed under the Phare programme was drawn up in co-operation with Ministry of Education and Science experts, teachers, representatives of the enterprises and foreign consultants. One of the objectives was to avoid an emphasis on an "over-encyclopaedic" level of knowledge and to establish the conditions for the effective acquisition of practical skills.

The reform in school-based vocational education and training was supported by the Phare Programme and by numerous bilateral co-operation projects with EU Member States.

2.3.2 *Special aspects*

2.3.2.1 *Qualifications*

Training within the system of vocational education is provided on the basis of the "List of occupations and specialisations taught in technical and vocational schools", which is approved by the Minister for Education.

This list sets out government rules for planning and organising educational activities within the overall framework of vocational and career guidance, vocational education and training and the management of the supply of labour.

Training is provided in a total of 264 occupations, which are grouped into different occupational families or groups.

Table 2.3 Occupational families and occupations /qualifications according to the 1993 List of Occupations for Technical and Vocational Schools

Occupational families	ISCED level 3* State examination and vocational qualification Total number	ISCED level 2** Vocational qualification Total number
Machine and instrument-building	24	2
Electronic technicians and electronics	16	–
Transport	10	7
Chemical technology	5	3
Construction	5	4
Forestry and wood-processing	8	3
Agriculture	6	3
Food-processing industry	16	12
Light industry	14	6
Economics, administration and management	12	–
Metallurgy and power engineering	5	–
Photography	8	–
Polygraphy	4	–

* *ISCED level 3 covers occupations taught in secondary technical and vocational schools, post-graduate vocational schools and professional gymnasiums;*

** *ISCED level 2 covers occupations taught in vocational technical schools.*

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Table 2.4 Typology of qualifications in vocational training[5]

Occupational family	**13 occupational families**		
ISCED	**Level 3**		**Level 2**
Qualification	Qualification for medium managerial and complex executive activities	Qualification for complex executive activities	Qualification for simple predominantly hand-operated executive activities
Length of training period	5 or 6 years in a technical school or a professional gymnasium after general education	4 years in a technical school after general education	2 or 3 years after general education
Form of training	Regular, evening or individual training, distance learning	Regular	Regular
Curriculum developed by the Ministry of Education and Science	National	National	National
Assessment	School	School	School
Admission requirements	For 6-year training – completion of 7th grade + admission examination; For 5-year training – general education certificate and admission examination	General education certificate	General education certificate
Access to	University, training in another occupation in a post-secondary vocational colleges	University, Post-secondary vocational college	Labour market, the system of secondary education
Graduation procedure	State examinations + qualification examinations	State examinations + qualification examinations	Qualification examination
Certificates on graduation	Secondary education diploma + a vocational qualification certificate	Secondary education diploma + a vocational qualification certificate	A vocational qualification certificate and a document indicating completion of specified school grade

Since 1994, the Ministry of Education and Science has completed a new "List of occupations covered by school and extra-mural training". This is an important step towards opening up the formal system of vocational education to labour market and extra-mural educational institutions. The List is open and is based on the National Classification of Occupations issued by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in 1996.

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[5] Classification based on European Training Foundation definitions.

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The list has been adopted as a statutory document for planning and organising activities in vocational/career guidance, vocational training, labour force needs analysis and employment on the labour market.

Changes in the List of Occupations, which are designed to meet the new challenges, include:

- extending the profile of the occupations covered;
- including independent trades and new occupations;
- co-ordinating the definitions in the List with the National Classification of Occupations;
- making provision for the inclusion and proper classification of craft occupations;
- developing a unified list of occupations to be taught at all types of secondary schools and out-of-school organisations offering vocational qualifications.

The structure of the list is based on the premise that occupations, which share specific, essential characteristics, can be classified into professional groups. This classification takes account of the type of activities involved in the different occupations, the tasks that make up these activities and similarities in the type of professional competence required.

The identification of occupations and their inclusion in the list, is based on various criteria.

- The need for relevant vocational training must be demonstrated.
- The training should be in activities requiring professional competence and personal responsibility in as wide a field as possible.
- There must be sufficient distinction between the different occupations for which training is provided.
- The training should provide the opportunity to implement educational policy.
- The basic conditions for qualifications improvement and professional development must be fulfilled.

Occupations are the basic element in the classification and structuring of the list. Each occupation is defined in terms of:

- the lowest educational level required to practice it;
- the existence of training opportunities; and
- the level of vocational qualification acquired through training.

The new List of Occupations is being put into practice on a gradual basis. In 1995, a pilot scheme of state requirements for vocational qualifications was prepared for seven occupations. By 1996, such requirements were being developed for another 18 occupations.

The occupations which make up an occupational family or group vary in terms of levels of qualification, the use of equipment and materials and the products or services provided, but they have a common area of activity.

The occupations are comprised of varying numbers of specialisations which are sufficiently similar from the point of view of the general education and skills required, and which demand a similar level of professional competence. The specialisations are a combination of different activities and tasks used in a given occupational family and grouped on a production, technological or target basis, according to the specific requirements of the industry.

The new list covers 183 occupations divided into 22 occupational families. The profile of the occupations corresponding to ISCED level 3 and ISCED level 2 has been extended. Only those occupations for which training is provided in vocational schools where pupils can acquire a vocational qualification along with a primary education have a narrow profile. This is due to the lower education level of the pupils in these schools. Craft occupations have been added to the List to cater to the needs of emerging small and medium-sized businesses.

The development of the new List of Occupations is required by the Law on Vocational Education and Training.

2.3.2.2 *Content of vocational training and curricula*

The vocational education and training system is characterised by the following basic features:

- uniform general and vocational training;
- uniform theory and practice;
- the organisation of the content of training so that there is a gradual transition from the general to the particular and from the generally applicable to the specific;
- differentiation between compulsory, elective and optional subjects; and
- uniform content and organisation.

To some extent, the curriculum for vocational qualifications parallels secondary education and is grouped around four types of instruction:

a) compulsory general instruction;

b) compulsory vocational instruction;

c) compulsory, elective instruction; and

d) optional instruction.

Compulsory instruction is basic in character, while the elective component is in line with the interests and aptitudes of students

General vocational instruction is part of compulsory vocational instruction. It is designed to develop knowledge and skills in the overall area of production. The main reason for the introduction of general vocational instruction is the need for flexibility and speedy adaptation to labour market and production conditions.

Compulsory subjects include:

- Bulgarian grammar and literature;
- two foreign languages;
- history and civilisation;
- geography and economics;
- psychology and logic;
- ethics and law;
- philosophy;
- pastoral care;

- mathematics;
- computing studies;
- information technology;
- physics and astronomy;
- biology and health education;
- chemistry and environmental studies;
- physical education;
- theoretical subjects related to the occupation being studied; and
- practical training.

One or two of the general education and vocational subjects are elective, but they are compulsory and included in the weekly class timetable. The third group, optional subjects, is taught in addition to compulsory school classes.

Compulsory vocational instruction is divided into three sections: general, branch and specific instruction, which includes a foreign language element.

General compulsory vocational instruction is the same for all occupational branches. It consists of theoretical and practical instruction. The branch compulsory element is the same for all occupations in the same branch and it, too, has theoretical and practical components. Occupation-specific compulsory instruction includes theory, practice and in-company training.

As laid down by the Law on Vocational Education and Training, the ratio between compulsory general education and compulsory vocational subjects is 1:1.5 in vocational schools with five-year programmes and 1:1.25 in secondary vocational schools with five-year programmes.

The content of post-secondary education is agreed in line with national norms (on curricula and organisation), which emphasise uniformity in the criteria used to assess students' achievements.

In line with established practice and tradition, general education instruction is the same in both general education and vocational schools. This contributes to the mobility of labour force in the period of transition to a market economy and provides opportunities for horizontal and vertical mobility in the education system.

Intense foreign language teaching has been introduced in technical schools and professional gymnasiums.

2.3.2.3 *Standards*

The Public Education Act, adopted in 1991, regulates the introduction of state educational requirements (standards), including vocational standards, into the education system.

National standards have been developed and introduced for the following occupations: construction technician, economist, organiser/manager, land surveyor, car mechanic, technician in wood-processing, secretary/administrator, tailor/designer, computer technician baker, software technician, electrical installation technician, gas technician, telecommunications technician, hotel and catering worker, electrician and machine mechanic. In developing curricula for these occupations, a modular approach to structuring content was adopted and a student-centred approach to the organisation of training was introduced.

The policy document, "The vocational education and training system: using a modular approach in vocational training", sets out the national framework for the development and introduction of a system of vocational qualifications based on a modular approach to vocational training. The framework was developed and introduced as part of the Phare project "Upgrading Vocational Education and Training". A system for assessing modular training was developed for each of the pilot occupations included in the project. A national standard for assessing modular training is in the process of being developed.

In line with the Vocational Education and Training Act, occupational standards are to be developed and approved by the National Vocational Education and Training Agency, which will assign this task to expert committees formed on a tripartite basis.

2.3.2.4 *Vocational guidance*

According to the Vocational Education and Training Act, vocational or career guidance is a system for informing, consulting and counselling students, the unemployed, and others in relation to their choice of occupation and career development. Guidance activities are carried out in Vocational Information and Guidance Centres.

Career guidance within the secondary education system is geared towards pupils' individual education choices and aims to prepare them for their future career, on the basis of the options provided by the education system and of labour market demands.

Career guidance activities include providing information about secondary and higher education options and providing students with the skills they need to make career decision and to prepare for their future employment.

Career or vocational guidance is being delivered in 3,895 schools within the education system. Guidance is available after completion of the first level of basic education and continues after graduation from secondary school. Guidance in schools is provided by the Pedagogical Advisory Offices.

The Pedagogical Advisory Offices are public sector bodies under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Science. Twenty-seven regional offices, with a total staff of about 100, operate throughout the country and provide organisational, methodological, information, diagnostic and counselling services. The organisational and methodological services include:

- help in the planning and implementation of vocational education and training activities in schools;
- advice to pedagogical counsellors;
- gathering information about the students;
- meetings with students and parents; and
- co-operation with external organisations and institutions.

Information activities focus on developing information material on educational institutions for different occupations in the region, education profiles and entry requirements for secondary schools and higher institutions. The information is delivered through the national and regional mass media and is also disseminated at different information events. Brochures, leaflets etc. are produced and meetings and training sessions are organised.

Diagnostic and counselling services consist of investigation, evaluation and advice.

Career guidance is directed at both students and parents and the different services are delivered by pedagogical counsellors. Guidance is also provided through special classes in career guidance which are taught in schools and in various extra-mural fora. Form teachers (each class has a form teacher) are responsible for teaching these classes. The overall plan for career guidance is developed by the Ministry of Education and Science. Activities under this plan are devised and implemented by pedagogical counsellors, form teachers, trainers and psychologists. The plan covers the following areas: awareness of different occupations and professions, vocational self-guidance, school selection, decision-making skills, vocational planning and career development etc.

The main responsibility for vocational guidance lies with the pedagogical counsellors, who work in close co-operation with teachers, form teachers, school doctors, student councils, school boards and school committees. There are more than 500 pedagogical counsellors. These help students to make educational or vocational choices and participate in problem solving.

The Centre for Vocational Education and Guidance, based in the National Institute for Education, provides methodological support for the system of vocational guidance. The main function of the Centre is to carry out research and information activities related to the education system. The Centre has a database of information on secondary and higher education and has developed a diagnostic methodology. The Centre delivers information and consulting services to pedagogical counsellors and vocational guidance experts. During the period 1996-98, the Centre published the following materials:

- a reference book with information on occupational profiles, occupations and occupational families within the system of secondary education (1996);
- a reference book on special schools in Bulgaria (published in 1997 and re-issued in 1998);
- a reference book on higher education institutions in Bulgaria (1996);
- a collection of thematic articles, "Step by step" and "Where, what, how?", for students from the 6th and 7th grades (1998); and
- a collection of thematic articles on vocational guidance (1998).

The vocational guidance system is based on a long tradition of counselling, guidance and diagnostics and it has had notable achievements in scientific research and development. The system has been successful in co-operating with external institutions such as the Labour Offices, vocational information centres, the mass media, universities, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and non-governmental organisations.

Because of socio-economic changes and the need for new standards that are in line with those in the EU, some problems relating to resources and financial support to the system have arisen and these have impacted on training, retraining, the upgrading of software etc.

The Ministry of Education and Science is still developing its policy for co-operation with different institutions on a national level. In this context, on 6 October 1998, a co-operation agreement in the area of employment policy and training was signed by the Ministries of Labour and Social Policy and of Education and Science. The main objective of the agreement is to allow the two ministries to develop joint preventative measures, which would have a positive effect on the development of the labour market. The integration of the system for vocational guidance into the National Employment Service is one element of the Agreement.

Vocational guidance was established in the National Employment Service in 1994. The project, "The Development of a Vocational Guidance System for Young People and Adults", designed by experts at various levels and from various units of the National Employment Service, is the first attempt to outline basic activities in the area of career guidance (information and counselling), the structure of and relationship between the various units involved, the major functions and tasks at different levels, the financial, human and technical resources necessary, the steps involved in the initial stages of setting up different structures etc. The project complies with the requirements of the "Basic instructions for designing and developing a vocational guidance and counselling system for young people and adults" which was approved by the management of the National Employment Service in 1994 (Minutes No. 28/03.02.1994).

The main objective of the career guidance system is to create the conditions and preconditions necessary for the efficient execution of state policy in the sphere of vocational training and retraining for young people and adults and for improving their employment opportunities.

Career guidance activities within the National Employment Service have been carried out in the Labour Offices' Vocational Guidance and Organisation of Training sections since their establishment. These activities are defined in the 'Blue Book', in the job descriptions of those working in these sections and in the "Main guidelines for the development and functioning of the Career Guidance System" designed by the Department for Career Guidance and the Organisation of Training at the Central Office of the National Employment Service.

The career guidance provided by the National Employment Service is based on the German model. Employees of the National Employment Service's Central Office, Regional Employment Offices and the Labour Offices were trained by German specialists in both Germany and Bulgaria.

The career guidance system (information and counselling) for young people and adults was put on an institutional footing when the collegium of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy made a formal decision to initiate the project (Minutes No. 4/08.12.1994).

The career guidance system is made up the following components:

- at national level, the Employment Services Division in the Central Office of the National Employment Service, together with the Departments of Vocational Guidance and Organisation of Training, the Department of Labour Mediation and Psychological Support, the Methodology Council and the Vocational Development and Guidance Centre;
- at regional level, the Regional Employment Services, together with their Vocational Qualifications department; and
- at local level, Labour Offices which have with Employment Services departments, Career Guidance and Organisation of Training departments and information or counselling units, i.e., Vocational Information Centres, "job clubs" and Vocational Information and Counselling Centres (in cases where the last two are established within the Labour Offices).

At present, there are seven Vocational Information Centres, of which six are based permanently in the Labour Offices in the towns of Varna, Dobritch, Vidin, Peshtera, Gabrovo and Provadia and one of which is a mobile unit in the town of Madan. A Vocational Information Centre in the town of Velingrad is in the process of being set up within the Labour Office. There are more than 14 "job clubs" already in existence.

The Vocational Information Centres' mandate is to offer support to people choosing a profession, to look for opportunities for vocational training and development and to promote employment by providing reliable information and delivering it in an accessible manner. Vocational Information Centres are self-help information units. They should be viewed as facilitating individual choice as they provide free and open access to all available information. (Clients are not required to make appointments.) Clients themselves decide how often and how quickly they look for and obtain information, which they can access without having to register preferences or personal details.

Self-service applies across the range of media and the conditions exist for clients to take independent decisions and exercise freedom of choice.

The Vocational Information Centres are open to anyone who is interested in career guidance and who wishes to enhance his/her knowledge by accessing information on different occupations/professions. This information may be available in different formats: paper, video, multi-media products, computer software or brief descriptions of professions. Specialised literature is available and can be accessed without restrictions based on nationality, gender, age, education, qualifications, employment status etc. Clients have at their disposal a wide range of information about professions and possible career paths, including vocational qualifications, training, education and the labour market.

Informing oneself is a necessary preliminary step to career guidance. There is a need, therefore, for an organisation providing fast and comprehensive access to relevant information. Vocational Information Centres provide information about the following:

- the nature of the profession, training conditions and requirements, and the conditions for practising the profession;
- the current state of the profession in question, together with the demand for, and career trends in, regionally and nationally important professions;
- the personal requirements for different occupations;
- the regional qualifications market;
- the opportunities for vocational education, training and retraining;
- the form and quality of education offered in the different educational institutions (educational units, secondary and higher schools, colleges, centres for post-graduate study etc.), admission criteria, documents and other requirements;
- specialisation profiles and qualification characteristics; and
- the labour market.

So far, various methodological materials have been developed for career guidance purposes. These include:

- "Vocational counselling – in support of the vocational consultant";
- "Methodological requirements for the design of information materials for career guidance (information lists, information files, videos, brochures, leaflets)";
- "Collection of procedures for the design, circulation and distribution of information materials for career guidance";
- "Instructions for specialists in career guidance"; and
- computer software entitled "Interests – Professions".

The following specialised information materials have been designed:

- information lists and information files for 340 professions;
- videos on 98 professions;
- multimedia packs for 90 professions; and
- brochures, folders and leaflets for 12 professions.

Within the National Employment Service, 210 people, or around 5% of total staff, are working on issues related to career guidance. Some have participated in brief training courses delivered by German specialists, by specialists from the National Employment Service Central Office, by the Regional Employment Services and by the Vocational Development and Guidance Centre.

2.3.2.5 *Adult education*

Adult education in Bulgaria has undergone reform in recent years. The ratification of international agreements, now incorporated into domestic legislation, and the need to respond to new demands, laid the basis for change.

The system of adult education is regulated by the legislation and by-laws on the formal educational system. The Vocational Education and Training Act is the most recent legislation that attempts to promote the integration of vocational education into the framework of both education and the labour market.

At the end of 1993, a Distance Education Centre was established at the New Bulgarian University with two units, the Radio University and the Higher School of Management. These units train adults in the management of small and medium-sized businesses, tourism management, marketing, advertising and business communication. Disabled students receive scholarships from the Open Society Fund or are exempt from fees.

Similar open departments have been established at most of the universities in the country. These departments provide citizens with opportunities to acquire an education or new qualifications, regardless of their age.

There is no specific legislation on adult education. Provision is made for adult education in the main body of legislation on education and in legislation relating to other aspects of socio-economic life.

The main elements of adult education policy may be summarised as follows: the government and educational institutions have the central role in programming adult education, the labour system plays the leading role in planning activities designed to help both the unemployed and the employed and in-company vocational education is developed by companies and enterprises.

Adults can acquire general or vocational education within the secondary education system through part-time or evening classes.

Prior to 1989, qualification upgrading and the retraining of adults was carried out in:

- professional training centres functioning as education units in enterprises and local centres;
- education centres and units at research, design, engineering, industrial transfer and other bodies;
- sectors for post-graduate education and training within the higher education establishments; and
- education and qualification complexes, based on the integration of secondary and higher education establishments, enterprises and research units.

After 1989, most of the centres, complexes and similar units established in enterprises for the purpose of upgrading skills and retraining were closed down due to the recession and a drop in production. Only in the more prosperous enterprises did a small number of training centres continue to function.

The provision of qualifications is a growing and profitable market which is still in the process of development and establishment. Numerous companies and institutions, both private and state-subsidised, offer opportunities for adult training and retraining. Training in most of them is based on programmes developed in the EU and other countries and relates to occupations typical of

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market economies. However, it is difficult to adapt these to Bulgarian conditions. Due to the vagueness of economic structural reform, the qualification services market still offers training which does not fully correspond to future needs, and competition tends to be fierce. The commercial aspect is stronger than the educational one. All this is due to a lack of tradition in the functioning of such a market. In future, it is intended that the secondary professional and technical schools should play a more active role in training and retraining, becoming training and qualification centres, especially in the smaller settlements. With their material assets and teaching staff, these schools could be quite competitive on the qualification services market.

There are 381 training institutions registered and operating with the National Employment Service system.

Upgrading of the qualifications of teachers and administrative staff in all types of secondary schools is carried out by specific institutes which were set up for that purpose. There are three such institutes in Bulgaria. Engineers, economists and other specialists with a higher education who teach in the professional and technical schools are licensed to teach following supplementary education which they can undertake in these institutes, in the teacher training departments of Sofia University, in teacher training institutes or other faculties in higher education establishments.

In 1997, as part of the Ministry of Education and Science Phare projects (see Chapter 8), Centres for the Development of Career Paths for Teachers were established in three vocational schools. The aim of these centres is to support the upgrading of the qualification of teachers, principals and pedagogical experts. Under another Phare project at the Ministry of Education and Science (see Chapter 8), three regional training centres for foreign language teachers in different occupations have been established.

3. Human resources development

3.1 Continuing vocational training

There is a long tradition of continuing vocational training in Bulgaria. Prior to the changeover to a market economy, there was one unified national system for upgrading staff qualifications. Workers, specialists and management staff were trained, for the most part, according to the provisions of a government decree of 1981 on forms of training and qualification. Statistical data from the 1980s show that from 700,000 to 1 million employed people were being trained annually in a network of more than 900 vocational training centres, schools and branches of these. The training conducted in the old centralised system can be classified as continuing vocational training.

Against the background of the economic crisis in 1990-1991, the centralised continuing vocational training system started to disintegrate. Many of the vocational training centres, most of which were based in enterprises, were closed. According to available data from 1992, between 5% and 10% of the training centres have survived and the number of trainees has decreased to less than 100,000 annually.

The early 1990s marked the start of developments in the training and consultant services market. Former training centres were replaced by rapidly emerging market-oriented companies and associations (mainly private), which offered training services in different areas: vocational training, foreign language training, management training, marketing etc. Most of these new training organisations are focused on the labour market and on co-operation with labour market structures, particularly the National Employment Service.

In 1994, a registration system for training organisations, providing training for the unemployed within the National Employment Service's regional structures (the Labour Offices) was introduced. The introduction of registration can be viewed as an attempt to establish certain regulations in a then unregulated market and to create a licensing or accreditation system.

Registration data show a rapid increase of the number of training organisations.

Table 3.1 ***Number of training organisations***

Year	1995	1997	1998	1999*
Number of training organisations	385	418	471	404

* *Registration as of 15 September 1999*

Source: Administrative statistics, National Employment Service

With the increase in the number of training organisations and the introduction of active measures aimed at limiting unemployment, the market in training grew rapidly. In 1996 alone, 196 registered training organisations conducted 1,259 courses on vocational training and motivation for the Labour Offices. From 1991 to 1997, 140,000 unemployed people participated in vocational training and motivation courses, i.e., about 20,000 per annum.

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From 1997 to 1998, there was a decrease in the numbers of both courses and trainees. This was due to a reduction in the level of financial support for the training of those unemployed persons for whom jobs could be provided. This restriction was imposed following the creation of the Currency Board. In 1997, only 3.3% of the 521,000 registered unemployed undertook training.

The limited supply of new jobs restricts opportunities for training the unemployed and, in 1991, this resulted in a restriction in the provision of training, not only for those following courses organised by the Labour Offices, but also for those unemployed for whom jobs could not be provided.

In July 1999, the Supervisory Council of the National Employment Service increased the allowance per trainee from 100 to 200 new Levs to cover increased costs in the provision of material and services in the vocational training of the unemployed. This budget is underwritten by the Professional Qualifications and Unemployment Fund. The increase in the budget puts the organisation of vocational training on a more firm footing and ensures better quality training.

The guaranteed work placement scheme also restricts the provision of training for the unemployed. This is why, since 1999, courses for the unemployed, which do not guarantee a work placement at the end of training, have been organised through the Labour Offices.

Over time, the state's role in continuing vocational training has become limited, mainly to the provision of training for the unemployed.

Due to the fact that no regular statistical information is collected from the companies and enterprises providing training, there is an absence of data on, for example, the number of trainees now in employment, the forms of training provided, the resources spent on training etc.

In the 1999 edition of the annual report of United Nations Organisation on the development of human resources in 174 countries, Bulgaria is placed 63rd, which is four places higher than in the 1998 edition. It is still an open question whether the improved classification is due to positive changes in Bulgaria or to the deterioration of conditions in other countries, Belarus, Turkey, Romania etc. It should be noted, however, that the fall off in the development of human resources in Bulgaria up to 1997 is now being reversed.

Table 3.2 Position of Bulgaria in the UN report on human resource development

Year	1991	1992	1996	1997	1998	1999
Position	33rd position	48th position	62nd position	69th position	67th position	63rd position

Source: United Nations Organisation, Annual Report on the Development of Human Resources, 1999.

In 1998-1999, there was an increase in the demand for continuing vocational training and more activity in this area in Bulgaria but there is no statistical information available to quantify this positive trend. Currently, there are still no incentives (preferential loans, tax concessions etc.) to stimulate the development and provision of continuing vocational training. This is an issue which should be resolved in the overall context of guaranteeing the right to education and access to training.

The right to education and training, including continuing vocational training, of Bulgarian citizens is guaranteed by Article 6 Paragraph. 2 of the Constitution and it is also specified in Article 53, Paragraphs 1 and 2. This right is included in the Labour Code (Article 8, Article 169, Paragraph 1) and in Chapter XII, "Vocational Training", which deals with the provision of continuing vocational training in enterprises.

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The practical implementation of the right to training and to access to continuing vocational training is stipulated in other pieces of legislation.

There is no separate legislation covering continuing vocational training in Bulgaria. The legal framework for this area of education is provided by the National Education Act and the Rules for its Implementation (1991), the Unemployment Protection and the Employment Incentives Act (1997) and the Rules for its Application (1998), and the Vocational Education and Training Act, which was adopted in July 1999.

In compliance with the established legal framework, responsibility for the regulation of continuing vocational training is allocated between the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the National Employment Service as well as some of the other Ministries (the Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Agrarian Reform, the Ministry of Industry etc.)

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Education and Science implement policy at a national level. On 7 October 1998, an agreement, providing for co-operation in the areas of employment and training policy, was signed by these two ministries. Annexes to the 1998 Agreement, drawn up in 1999, specify the nature and scope of their joint activities.

A National Council on Vocational Training has been established in accordance with the Unemployment Protection and Employment Incentives Act. The Council is composed of representatives from the two ministries and representatives of the social partners. A National Agency for Vocational Education and Training will be established under the 1999 Vocational Education and Training Act. The Agency will accredit and license the activities of the main actors in the vocational education and training system and will co-ordinate the institutions involved. It will also take on the current responsibilities of the National Council on Vocational Qualifications.

Although no guidelines on the implementation of Vocational Education and Training Act have been drawn up, the practice is that the Ministry of Education and Science proposes initiatives together with other key players in vocational education and training. A strategy and policy for the national system of vocational guidance for young people and adults, which includes the establishment of a modular centre for vocational guidance and information, has been developed in this way.

The initiation of joint projects, as well as a strengthening of co-operation between the governmental and non-governmental organisations involved in the reform and development of vocational education and training, will become a permanent feature of national policy. This is expected to make a major contribution to the achievement of positive results during the process of reform.

Formulating policy on the development of continuing vocational training in the labour market (the vocational training and retraining of the unemployed) falls within the competence of the National Employment Service and its regional organisations – the Regional Employment Services and the Labour Offices. A decentralised approach is being applied, thus allowing the system to react to market conditions and regional and local labour market training needs, i.e., the supply and demand of labour and the quality of the unemployed workforce. The general rules and procedures for the registration of training organisations are centrally approved. These govern the provision of training for the unemployed and include regulations for organisations submitting tenders to provide training, rules on the conclusion of training contracts, etc. These rules are obligatory for all those involved in the provision of continuing vocational training on the labour market.

The tripartite principle, which implies facilitating the representation of the social partners, is also observed in the continuing vocational training sector. The Supervisory Council of the National Employment Service, which deals with training policy on the labour market, involves the representatives of the social partners and those responsible for public continuing vocational training organisations.

A current problem for continuing vocational training is the lack of modern standards to guarantee the quality of training. In the absence of these, it is difficult to ensure quality control and effective management. This has a negative effect on training activities, on the syllabuses and training techniques used and, ultimately, on the training outcome and the qualifications acquired.

A consensus has now been reached among those responsible for continuing vocational training institutions on how to tackle the problem of quality. Within the new legal framework, rules on the drafting, development, approval and implementation of standards have been agreed. Issues such as the control of compliance with standard requirements and the development of standards in line with changes in the different vocational areas will be the responsibility of the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, which has yet to be established.

Curricula for continuing vocational training courses throughout the country must comply with the Ministry of Education and Science plans and programmes for vocational schools and be approved by the Ministry. It is possible to use curricula drawn from other training organisations, if the vocational training course is not related to the education sector and simply services specific needs of enterprises.

The training of trainers is another problem in continuing vocational training and is an area which is proving difficult to reform and develop. The successful resolution of this problem would require the development of a training system which is analogous to the general secondary and vocational educational system, but which responds to the particular needs and conditions of continuing vocational training as a form of adult education.

Another issue, which is directly related to the training of trainers, is the use of training methods (methods of teaching and learning). The methodology which is currently used reflects the ethos of traditional training organisations, which do not sufficiently satisfy current needs or respond to changing socio-economic conditions and requirements and which do not adhere to modern principles in either the theory or the practice of adult training.

In order to allow the market to develop successfully, it is necessary to solve the problem of the accreditation of training organisations. By law, vocational schools still have a monopoly in this market and this has generated protests from the other participants, mainly private companies and associations. A significant number of these can offer a higher quality of training, provided the necessary conditions and incentives are in place. The development and the application of modern criteria, indices and procedures for the accreditation of all training organisations should stimulate innovation in continuing vocational training.

Initial vocational training provides the necessary basis for further vocational training, human resource development and continuing vocational training. In this sense, it is necessary that links and synergies be developed between these relatively independent areas of training. However, the necessary conditions for creating these links and for promoting good relations between initial and continuing vocational training have not yet been established.

Assessment, examinations and certification are still being organised along traditional lines, using traditional means and methods. The usual practice is to rely on the tutors' skills to check and assess the students' knowledge. There are no fully developed control and assessment tests, which allow for the active participation of the trainees and for self-regulation and which minimise subjectivity in assessment. Independent examination bodies to conduct the examinations for nationally recognised vocational qualifications have not yet been established. It is necessary to develop a new system for assessment and certification, similar to those in force in EU countries.

The incentives and measures to promote continuing vocational training in enterprises are insufficient. With the onslaught of the economic crisis, training in both state and private enterprises has stagnated. As mentioned above, there is no systematic statistical monitoring of the training activities of companies. This is indicative of the insufficient attention the state is paying to training and suggests that training of the employed is still not considered a priority. It is expected that the Law on Statistics, which was adopted on 15 June 1999, and the adoption of more flexible approaches to the organisation and conduct of statistical surveys and analyses, will contribute to the gradual solution of this problem.

On a national level, it is already clear that the stagnation in the system needs to be overcome and on-the job training stimulated. This is essential to improving the level of qualification of the employed, providing the right conditions for attracting investments, raising the technical and technological capacity of production and fulfilling the other requirements necessary to prepare Bulgaria for EU membership.

3.2 *Training for management and administrators*

Bulgaria has an established tradition and considerable experience in management training at all levels for both economic and non-economic sectors and for administrative personnel. Part of the unified national system for upgrading qualifications covers management training for the employed. In the past, training was geared towards the needs of the planned economy and the administrative structure of the socialist public system. Western experience in this field was limited to teaching mainly classical theories of management and administration. Modern developments in these areas were less well known and less well covered by training. For this reason, the country did not have a pool of managers trained in how to operate in a real market environment. The dynamic changes that took place after 1989 and the transition to a market economy highlighted this deficiency and the need for an advanced management and administration training programme

In the early 1990s, there was a real boom in management training. Numerous organisations offering in training in different forms and on different levels emerged, many of them supported by foreign educational institutions, chambers of industry and commerce, trades unions, foundations etc.

Management and business executive training courses were also successfully provided by higher education colleges and other educational institutions and many post-graduate programmes in management have been introduced.

Different Phare and Tempus projects and other programmes and sources of funding supported the development of management training. Among the positive results attained are: the establishment of modern Bachelors and Masters' programmes; the setting up of relevant training facilities; and the publication of specialised literature.

In the future, special attention will be paid to building co-operation between the recently established specialised training facilities and foreign consultancy organisations. Good examples of co-operation include: Markom, which has French partners; Informa, which has partners from Germany; and the Institute of Marketing (Sofia), which is working together with the Bulgarian Industrial Association and the Austrian Institute for Economic Development.

Initially, these companies organised a lot of short-term initiatives to present and popularise their activities, projects and programmes, e.g., individual lectures by foreign consultants, one day-seminars etc. Gradually, there was a transition to series of seminars and courses on different topics and aspects of the market economy, business organisation, marketing and company management. These were directed mainly at practising managers.

A new tendency, which emerged in 1999, is to conclude the training with a study visit and/or internship in one of the EU countries. This is linked to establishing contacts with potential foreign business partners. In this way, successful economic co-operation between Bulgarian and foreign companies can be initiated and training acquires a real and practical dimension.

Training-related consultancy services have been successfully developed. Usually, training organisations also provide consultancy services, but there are also a lot of specialised consultancy offices and teams, offering services in different, economic and non-economic, areas and sectors.

The implementation of administrative reform and the establishment of a new administrative structure in Bulgaria have created a real need for training for administrative staff. The legal framework for the reform has been laid down in the Law on State Administration, the Law on the Civil Service etc.

Within the framework of the reform, there will be a need to define functions, areas and levels of competence and to introduce measures to improve administrative structures and activities. A basic element in this process is the drafting of new job descriptions. To satisfy the demand for administrators' training, it is necessary to develop a system of vocational qualifications for the different administrative areas and levels. Using this as the background, the basic training needs can be precisely determined, concrete plans and training programmes designed, tests selected and control and evaluation procedures put in place.

An analysis of the training needs[6] of managers and administrators from the ministries and one Foundation was conducted by the Local Experts Facility in August-September 1999, with a view to "strengthening the capacity of the Ministries and Agencies involved in the EU integration process". The main objective of the analysis was to identify the current status of skills and, particularly, the skill gaps, in key institutions and stakeholders in the context of Bulgaria's Pre-accession Activities. In general, the results of the Training Needs Analysis are similar to those found in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the EU. The authors of the Training Needs Analysis recommended training in the following areas:

- time management;
- personnel management, with specific reference to personnel administration, working conditions, salary administration etc.;
- effective performance appraisal of staff;
- modern communication methods;
- management skills and understanding the difference between leadership skills and management skills;
- work planning and the development of work plan valid for the whole organisation;
- systematic solving of problems;
- analysing job needs;
- teamwork;
- organisational skills;
- behavioural skills;
- understanding/managing stress;

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[6] Training Needs Analysis Report, CFCU, Ministry of Finance, November 1999

- handling meetings;
- presentations skills;
- managing projects;
- making decisions;
- designing job descriptions;
- producing reports and other documents; and
- managing conflict.

The Training Needs Analysis also indicated that there was a need for training to acquire skills in financial management, foreign languages and EU legislation, and to upgrade computer skills.

As there is not enough experience to implement a training programme of this size and complexity, the establishment of a specialised training institute, under direct government control, is recommended. The need for technical assistance with the overall programme and for co-operation with relevant foreign partners is also recognised.

Because vocational education and training and continuing training have an increasingly important role to play in socio-economic development and in speeding up reform, training for the key figures involved in these areas is needed.

These key figures include the following groups:

- administrators from government institutions responsible for human resources development, including vocational education and training and involved in the elaboration and implementation of national policy and decision-making in this area;
- administrators in non-governmental organisations (the social partners etc.) involved in the social dialogue and in the tripartite management of vocational education and training on a national and regional level;
- key figures from training organisations – universities, colleges, educational institutions, training centres etc. – who occupy central positions in vocational education and training and continuing training and are involved in implementing leading development objectives, such as the training of trainers, in this area;
- research workers and consultants in the area of vocational education and training, working in state and non-state specialised organisations who are involved, or have the potential to participate, in innovative projects.

Regardless of any subjective appraisal of training needs, the training of these key figures should include:

- the improvement and extension of foreign language training, mainly in the official languages used in the EU – English and French and German, in keeping with Bulgaria's geographical situation and historically established cultural relations;
- training in new information technologies and communications – computerised interactive systems, the Internet etc.;
- the acquisition of information on current trends in vocational education and training, including continuing training, and on the regulation and management of vocational education and training in the EU and in its individual Member States and regions;

- an analysis of the problems of transition and of vocational education and training reform in the partner countries included in the Phare and Tacis Programmes and of the best practice used to deal with them, with a view to enhancing the capacity to deal with concrete practical problems in Bulgaria;
- approaches to, and methodologies for, the approximation of legislative standards, policy and basic procedures, and for meeting EU requirements for training and qualifications;
- training on the basic problems in, and different aspects of, the development of vocational education and training and of continuing training, e.g., social partnership and the tripartite principle, decentralisation, standards, transparency, licensing, accessibility, determining training needs, modern training organisations, certification, linking training to an overall and continuous process of change etc.

The focus on the training of key figures (i.e., the European Training Foundation staff programme development etc.) during 1995-1996 laid a solid foundation. Unfortunately, in 1998-1999, there was no systematic follow-up and no guidance was provided on how the training process should respond to new challenges. The seminars to introduce Bulgarian experts to EU programmes, e.g., Leonardo da Vinci, and to aspects of community policy on, and approaches to, training and qualifications, e.g., regionalisation, transparency etc. were, of course, useful. However, they are not sufficient and a more systematic training programme is required. Bulgarian experts need more information on the new EU programmes in the area of vocational education and training and continuing training if they are to develop a modern legislative framework for vocational education and training and if they are to create an institutional framework, at a community and regional level, that will facilitate their access to the European Social Fund etc.

In this context, the Special Preparatory Programme for the European Social Fund for the partner countries, including Bulgaria[7], can be considered timely. A National Resource Centre for the preparation of Bulgaria for the European Social Fund was established within the Human Resource Development Centre in July 1999. During the period from its establishment to the end of 1999, the National Resource Centre organised a series of training seminars under the Special Preparatory Programme:

- a first introductory seminar;
- a national workshop;
- a supplementary seminar;
- a national conference; and
- a local seminar in one of the priority regions indicated in the National Development Plan.

The purpose of the seminars was to introduce key institutions and stakeholders in Bulgaria to the basic operating principles of the European Structural Funds, including the European Social Fund and to present the experience of EU Members States in the planning and utilisation of the Structural Funds. To further this aim, the Centre prepared an information brochure on the European Social Fund and disseminated it to a wide audience.

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[7] European Community Structural Funds, Horizon, publication of the Phare programme, Education, Ministry of Education and Science, 10, 1998, pp.1-2.

4. Research on vocational education and training and labour market

4.1 *Research institutions and areas of work*

Despite the lack of finance and budgetary restrictions, which seriously limit and reduce the scope of research work, the research carried out in the field of vocational education and training and the labour market is extremely varied.

The *national system of research* promotes the development and application of research, based on the interests of identified clients, usually from the academic sector (higher education).

The *National Fund for Research and Science of the Ministry of Education and Science* finances projects in the field of humanities, mostly in relation to problems in society, social development and the economy.

Research on problems in the area of vocational education and training is carried out by the main institutions at a national level, the National Institute for Education and the Centre for Vocational Education and Guidance in the Ministry of Education and Science. In the period between 1990 and 1999, 26 projects in the field of vocational education and training were completed. The National Institute for Education carried out research in the following areas:

- the development of national vocational standards;
- the theory and practice of vocational education and training;
- the evaluation of vocational education curricula;
- the assessment of vocational competencies;
- the accreditation of vocational qualifications and schools;
- the financing of vocational education and training;
- the network of vocational schools;
- vocational training in economics;
- vocational education and training management etc.

Some large-scale studies have been conducted, mainly in the area of comparative education, which reflect positively on the system of education, in general, and on vocational education and training, in particular, in view of the reforms underway. These include the following studies:

- *Secondary education in some developed countries*, an outline of the parameters of secondary education in the EU countries, the established traditions and development trends;
- *Regional systems in secondary education*, a study of regional imbalances in the distribution of schools;

- *Private education in some developed countries,* a comparative analysis of private education in Western European countries; and
- *Alternative educational structures in a market economy environment,* the state of the education system in Bulgaria and tendencies in the development of the growing private sector.

Within the same period, two large-scale studies have been carried out for the Ministry of Education and Science:

- *An overall analysis of the development of the system of education,* a White Paper on Education and Science in Bulgaria;
- *Vocational Education in Bulgaria – status,* problems, perspectives, an overview of vocational education and training in the country and an outline of the principles underlying the reform of the structure and content of the vocational education and training system.

Information on theoretical perspectives on vocational education and training and on the analyses and practical steps undertaken in the period 1989 to 1995 has been published in a **bulletin on "Vocational education"**, edited jointly by the *Ministry of Education and Science and the National Statistics Institute*. Since 1995, general statistics on secondary general and secondary vocational education are collected by the Institute.

The *Centre for Vocational Guidance within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy* also carries out research work, especially on vocational guidance for the unemployed.

Within the context of a large-scale **project on social reform**, a team from the *Bulgarian Academy of Sciences* conducted an overall examination of social reform, including vocational education and training, with an emphasis on economic parameters and financing.

The focus of the research carried out at *the university level* differs slightly and aims at specific problems in the system of education in general and the vocational education and training system in particular. The following are among the studies carried out:

- *Market and non-market defects in the socio-cultural area education,* carried out by a team from the University for National and Global Economic Studies;
- *Comparative education,* carried out by a team from Sofia University (St. Clement Ochridsky);
- *Organisational structure and management models in the education system and the organisation and management of education,* two studies which focus on the organisational and management aspects of reform in education within a market economy;
- *Bulgaria, Europe and human knowledge,* which examines the place and the role of education in the development of economics and the social sphere;
- *New aspects of the economics of education,* which reviews the economics of education and offers a comparative analysis of the different models of financing, the allocation of resources to education and the provision of resources for the educational system; and
- *Vocational training – legislative framework and trends,* an analysis of the legal framework and of the changes and future developments needed to adapt vocational training to labour market needs.

All trade unions carry out their own research on the employment of their members, training needs and opportunities for the development of human resource.

4.2 Role of the Bulgarian National Observatory on vocational education and training and the labour market

The Bulgarian National Observatory, as a part of the National Observatory Network established by the European Training Foundation, became operational at the end of March 1997. It is hosted by the Phare Programme Management Unit (Education) in the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science. It was established following an agreement between the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Education and Science, detailed in a protocol drawn up by the relevant Deputy Ministers on behalf of the Bulgarian Government.

In July 1999, the Observatory became a unit within the new established Human Resource Development Centre.

The main objectives of the Observatory are:

- to collect information from different sources and to update the country report on vocational education and training and the "Key Indicators" report, with statistical data on vocational education and training and the labour market;
- to monitor the current situation and its impact where possible;
- to contribute to research on vocational education and training and the labour market;
- to analyse available information and its implications;
- to suggest scenarios for vocational education and training development to the stakeholders in this area;
- to strengthen the links between different vocational education and training institutions; and
- to disseminate available information through publishing regular brochures, organising different events such as seminars, workshops, etc.

The activities carried out by the Observatory in 1999 were:

- the production of the Vocational Education and Training, Country Report for 1999 and the Key Indicators Report for 1999;
- the organisation of the first meeting of the Centres for Vocational Training and of the third workshop for donors in the field of vocational education and training;
- participation in the Background Study on Employment Policy Review;
- the carrying out of surveys on "Vocational education and training research in Bulgaria", "On-the job training and apprenticeship", "Active employment measures and human resource development" and "The training of the unemployed";
- the organisation of workshops on "Transparency and the Mutual Recognition of Qualifications" and "Regulated Professions in Bulgaria";
- the organisation of a workshop to present and discuss the paper "Assessment of the vocational education and training sector in Bulgaria with regard to the acquis communautaire", prepared by the European Training Foundation;

- the organisation of a regional seminar on "Active Employment Measures and Human Resource Development: Training of the Unemployed"; and
- the carrying out of a sociological survey and in-depth qualitative analysis on, "School drop-outs – problems and reasons", as part of the Phare project, School for Everyone.

5. Responsible bodies

5.1 Description

The main institutions responsible for state policy in the field of vocational education and training are the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Culture and the National Employment Service.

The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for vocational education and training as a part of school education, including adult education (i.e., continuing education). The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy traditionally supervises vocational training outside the school system (i.e., continuing vocational training of unemployed and employed people). The Ministry of Culture is responsible for art schools. The National Employment Service organises and offers training measures for all people who are registered as unemployed and, in some cases, for employed people.

The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for training all young people of compulsory school age. On the basis of the Constitution and the Public Education Act, the Ministry pursues a policy of providing equal opportunities for training for all groups in Bulgarian society. The Public Education Act states that

> *"No discrimination based on considerations of race, nationality, sex, ethnic or social origin, religion or social status will be permitted in the education system".*

Mentally and physically handicapped people are given particular support in order to improve their participation in education, and particularly in vocational education. Individuals with a medical disability can apply to secondary vocational schools, technical schools and professional gymnasiums under the free quota system. The goals of vocational education and training for the mentally handicapped are to improve individual self-confidence and increase their potential to control their own daily activities.

According to the Public Education Act, vocational schools are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science.

The Ministry of Education and Science's functions include:

- the development of strategies for vocational education and training;
- the nomination of headmasters;
- the development and implementation of curricula;
- the analysis of training needs;
- the approval of occupations for training;
- the monitoring and control of financial, educational, and economic activities in vocational and technical schools;
- the financial management of state schools;

- the inspection of schools;
- the supervision of the process of issuing final certificates;
- approving the establishing and closure of private vocational schools; and
- approving the conditions for acquiring teaching qualifications.

The Regional Inspectorates are a unit of the Ministry of Education and Science and, at the regional level, are responsible for implementing state policy on vocational education and continuing training within the formal system. The vocational schools are the main actors in vocational education. They are also involved in continuing vocational training for the labour market in that they offer training services for the unemployed and the employed. To co-ordinate the work done by the various bodies, the Ministry of Education and Science has issued a Regulation on Training Services. According to this regulation, the vocational and technical schools can organise training courses for adults (including unemployed people) and can provide in-company training and retraining, at the request of employers. The programmes for the vocational training of unemployed and employed people are developed in line with Ministry of Education and Science's regulations.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy develops, co-ordinates and implements state policy on the vocational training of the labour force (both the employed and the employed), in line with the Unemployment Security and Employment Encouragement Law and Decree No. 485 of the Council of Ministers of 22 December 1997. The Ministry also plays a role in keeping the National Classification of Occupations up to date.

The National Employment Service is an independent legal entity and implements state policy in the area of vocational training. It organises vocational training financed by the Vocational Qualifications and Unemployment Fund. The National Employment Service carries out its activities through local branches, i.e., the Regional Employment Services and the local Labour Offices.

Tasks undertaken by the National Employment Service include :

- providing information on vocational training and qualifications;
- providing consultation and guidance services;
- organising vocational training for the unemployed and other people;
- developing, and participating in the drafting of, employment and vocational training programmes for various groups in the labour force;
- managing the organisation of training for unemployed people and ensuring the quality of that training; and
- registering training units (companies, organisations, schools etc.) for participation in tenders organised by the Labour Offices to provide training for the unemployed etc.

The National Council for Vocational Training was established by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy under Article 83, paragraph 3 of the Unemployment Protection and Employment Incentives Law. It is based on the principle of tripartite co-operation. An equal number of representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Education and Science, national employer organisations and national employee organisations participate in the Council. The Council ensures that state requirements in relation to the provision of vocational training, i.e., with regard to the registration and licensing of training organisations, the approval of training programmes etc., are met. When the Vocational Education and Training Act comes into force, the National Council for Vocational Training will cease its activities.

The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency for Higher Education started work when Higher Education Act was adopted in December 1995. The establishment of this agency was recommended by a Phare feasibility study. A Phare project on the accreditation of higher education institutions is underway at present.

The provisions dealing with the accreditation of the education institutions set out in the Higher Education Act were amended in 1999.

Co-operation between Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and Ministry of Education and Science was strengthened with the signing of an Agreement between them in October 1998. The Agreement outlines the main objectives of education policy and assigns responsibilities for its implementation in line with the demands of the labour market. According to the Agreement, the main tasks include decreasing the number of graduates in certain occupational profiles by introducing enrolment restrictions and developing measures to support and achieve the social integration of groups of young people at risk. Planned initiatives include measures to promote youth initiatives to increase employment and the inclusion of the study of the labour market, as a part of civil society, in the school curriculum .

The national employers' organisation and national employees' organisations participate in discussions on vocational education and training. However, they do not play an active role in the preparation of legislation in this area.

Government strategy in the area of vocational education and training field envisages much more active participation on the part of employers and non-governmental organisations in shaping policy and monitoring the labour market in order to meet the challenges arising from privatisation, the reform of the industrial sector and the reform of the public administration system which is currently underway.

The recently adopted Vocational Education and Training Act has changed the responsibility of the institutions involved in vocational education and training.

5.2 *Centralisation and decentralisation*

At the moment, standards for initial vocational education and training are set by the Ministry of Education and Science and standards for continuing training of the employed and unemployed are set by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the National Employment Service. The three institutions implement these standards through their institutional networks (the Regional Inspectorates, the Labour Office etc.) and try to co-operate in reaching a common national framework to match EU requirements. Decentralisation of responsibilities to local levels has been carried out in line with the new legal framework which provides for the transfer of responsibilities to regional and municipal level. However, much remains to be done in order to acquire the degree of flexibility and responsiveness found among key players in efficient EU vocational education and training systems.

Measures to upgrade the education system (including initial vocational education and training) have meant the transfer of some responsibilities to the Regional Inspectorates. The Ministry of Education and Science is also implementing its policy to optimise the use of the existing network of vocational schools. The contributions made by international projects (Phare, the World Bank, bilateral projects etc.) have been an enormous help in shaping and implementing policy in this area.

6. Legislation

6.1 *Current status and future requirements*

The functioning of the entire vocational education and training system is based on the Public Education Act of 1991 and its amendment in 1998. The Vocational Education and Training Act and the laws on the Level of Schooling, the General Educational Minimum and the Syllabus were all adopted in 1999.

The Unemployment Protection and Employment Incentives Law took effect on I January 1998. One of its objectives (Article 1, paragraph 1) is to increase public awareness and improve public attitudes towards vocational training and requalification and to create a positive environment for training both the unemployed and employed.

According to the Law,

> *"vocational training can be provided by companies registered under Bulgarian legislation and other organisations which offer training and by vocational schools." (Article 85, paragraph 1).*

The Law grants licensed companies and vocational schools the right to hold examinations and to issue qualification certificates (Article 85, paragraph 2). These provisions are integrated into the 1999 Vocational Education and Training.

The initiatives taken by various ministries and agencies in the field of vocational education and training system are not co-ordinated. Employers show far too little interest in the training of future workers. Trade unions play only a symbolic role. Local authorities and municipalities rarely participate in the development of vocational education and training. Currently, there is no mechanism to facilitate greater co-operation between the institutions, which are still competing against each other for areas of influence. According to the Vocational Education and Training Act (see below), responsibility is distributed between the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the social partners. The Act regulates the relationships between vocational schools, the Labour Offices, employers and trade unions. However, schools have neither information on the employment situation of graduates nor any analysis of labour market demand at their disposal.

The other acts providing the legal basis for vocational education and training in Bulgaria include the Labour Code, the Public Education Act , the Law on the Level of Schooling, the General Educational Minimum and the Syllabus, which was adopted in 1999 and the Law on Higher Education, which was adopted in 1995 and last amended in 1999.

The Vocational Education and Training Act was drafted by representatives of the different institutions in the vocational education and training sector under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Science. It regulates the structure and content of vocational education and training, the types of training institutions, standards and procedures for awarding vocational qualifications, the financing of vocational education and training, the involvement of social partners etc. The Act envisages the establishment of a National Agency for Vocational Education and Training which would be responsible for a wide range of tasks including:

- the accreditation of institutions in the vocational education and training system;
- the licensing of training activities;
- drawing up of a list of professions in vocational education and training;
- fixing the educational requirements for acquiring qualifications in certain professions;
- managing state examinations;
- co-ordinating the development of vocational education and training; and
- establishing and maintaining of register of centres for vocational training and centres for vocational guidance and information.

6.2 Co-ordination between vocational education and training and other policy areas

Efforts to establish and develop policy in areas which have a direct bearing on vocational education and training (the labour market, employment, social policy etc.) are not co-ordinated at the national level. However, the government is attempting to maximise the efficiency of existing institutions in all areas, including the social and vocational training sectors, through a programme of administrative reform. Changes in legislative procedures and the promotion of new policy objectives are at present underway.

7. Financing of vocational education and training and continuing vocational training

7.1 *Sources of finance for vocational education and training at national, regional and local levels*

The three main sources of finance for the vocational education and training system in Bulgaria:

- the budgets of both the state and the local authorities;
- the Professional Qualifications and Unemployment Fund; and
- external financing.

The state budget and the Vocational Training and Unemployment Fund provide basic funding, while external financing provides supplementary funds. In recent years, a system of individual payments for vocational education and training, e.g., financing through household budgets and non-governmental organisations, has emerged.

A mixed scheme for financing vocational education and training depends on the existence of these different sources of funding. The main source of funds depends, in each case, on the type of vocational education and training provided.

Finance from public budgets is the main source of funding for schools. Most of the schools are financed by the state budget through the Ministry of Education and Science, while schools in the cultural and agricultural sectors are financed by their respective ministries. An exception to this is the funding of the vocational schools in Burgas region, which is provided from the local authority budget. The fact that some funding from local sources a precondition for state budget subsidies is well known. The idea that revenues from local taxation should contribute more towards funding the vocational education and training system has recently been launched and steps are being taken to prepare the necessary regulations for this change.

Table 7.1 Expenditures on education as a percentage of the Consolidated State Budget, 1990-1999

1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
7.9	10.5	13.4	11.9	10.3	9.4	7.3	10.2	10.0	10.5

Source: National Statistics Institute

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According to the 1999 Ministry of Education and Science report, expenditure on vocational schools amounts to 67,100 thousand Levs. The initial allocation was 67,500 thousands Levs, and 99.9% was utilised. These data indicate that the average expenditure per pupil in 1999 was 333.23 Levs. The subsidy from the state budget to the Ministry of Education and Science is 132,700 thousands Levs (not including the transfer for higher schools and the Bulgarian Academic Society). The percentage of funding for vocational education and training from the total Ministry of Education and Science budget is 50.5%. This represents over 6% of the Consolidated Government Budget and about 1.25% of GDP.

A system of net budget financing has been in operation for the last decade and underpins the mixed scheme. The legislative framework for funding is provided by the Law on the Level of Schooling, the General Educational Minimum and the Syllabus, the Vocational Education and Training Act, and Regulation Act No.6/1994. Financial assistance from external sources (the Financial Management of School Education project initiated under the Phare Programme) provided support for carrying out a pilot project, in four municipalities and covering 100 schools, on modifications to the principle of central funding. The project organisers concluded that delegated budgets provide greater financial autonomy and that financing should be based on an established formula.

7.1.1 *Financing from the Vocational Training and Unemployment Fund*

This is mainly envisaged for the vocational training and retraining of persons who have graduated from secondary schools and the unemployed. In 1999, payments to the Fund amounted to 4% of wages, 0.5% were paid by the employees and 3.5% by employers. The tax regulations for 2000 envisage a continuation of this tax but the tax burden will be distributed differently: 0.8% will be paid by employees and 3.2% by employers.

Table 7.2 Expenditure from the Vocational Training and Unemployment Fund

Year	Expenditure of VTU Fund (thousands Levs)	Expenditure on training (thousands Levs)	Expenditure on training from the VTU Fund (%)
1995	5,449,915	87,567	1.61
1996	8,858,855	152,313	1.72
1997	108,023,500	719,270	0.66
1998	140,445,059	284,144	0.20
1999	205,445,215	1,592,400*	0.78

* *This sum includes expenditure on training courses organised by the National Employment Service. If the expenditure on programmes and measures were added, the total amount would be 3,401,000 thousand Levs.*

Source: Administrative statistics, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy

A total of 1,592,400 Levs (0.78% of the 205,445,215 Levs available in the Professional Qualifications and Unemployment Fund) were utilised for active employment policy measures, i.e., training.

Table 7.2 indicates that:

- the Vocational Training and Unemployment Fund and the expenditure on training has increased almost five fold (based on current prices);

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- if the expenditure on active measures under the programmes are added, the growth in 1999 compared to the previous year would be almost twelve fold;
- if the inflation rate from 1995-1999 is taken into account then, the increased amount is nominal only; and
- there was a gradual and continuous decrease in expenditure on training over the period 1995 to 1998, but the allocation of more funds to active measures against unemployment modified this tendency in 1999.

A rigorous analysis of such factors as how employment is measured and the average costs of training courses (which should include a profile of the training provided) would provide a more reliable basis for interpreting levels of expenditure. The data presented above, therefore, cannot and should not be used a rationale for restricting expenditure on active employment measures.

7.2 *External financing*

According to recent data, projects with budgets totalling USD 42,963,000 have been launched in the last four years. This is equal to 0.46% of total expenditure on educational projects. In 1998, a total of USD 5,089,000 were utilised, while in 1999, the figure was USD 5,600,000. These funds represent approximately 70% of all funding from external sources and are earmarked for vocational education and training. This indicates that vocational education and training is the main priority for these external sources. Beneficiaries of these projects include the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Donors include the European Union, the World Bank and bilateral and international contributors.

Analyses of household expenditure, together with sociological surveys, indicate that the average Bulgarian pays a comparably small part of his/her income on education. It should be noted that fees are payable only for private educational services. Data from the Ministry of Education and Science show that, as of 1 March 1999, 40 vocational schools and 5 schools in the field of culture had obtained licenses to provide training services. Under current legislation, private training organisations do not receive any state subsidies. The level of sponsorship and donations to these bodies remains low and this is thought to be due the absence of tax preferences/incentives in the tax system. The only reliable source of finance for private bodies is the fees paid by clients.

There is a lack of information on fees paid to private training bodies. The number of consumers is limited as prices remain unregulated.

Sociological surveys on private training organisations illustrate two points in particular:

- half of those interviewed are fully or partially satisfied with the quality of the educational services offered by private bodies; and
- the other half indicates that they cannot afford to pay or do not consider the private educational institutions to be reliable.

It is clear that decisions on the future of private training bodies will have to look at new ways of financing them – state subsidies, management contacts, tax concessions, educational credits etc.

8. The contribution of bilateral and multilateral donors to vocational education and training reform

8.1 *EU Phare projects*

8.1.1. *The Ministry of Education and Science*

The Ministry of Education and Science runs the following projects for the reform and development of the vocational education system

Post-secondary vocational training

The aim of the project is to develop modular post-secondary education training. Curricula for two vocational fields have been drafted – computer specialist organiser and construction technician. Equipment for three pilot schools has been purchased.

Upgrading vocational education and training

The aim of the project is to provide new, largely modular, curricula covering up to 20 occupational profiles. The curricula are being developed in conjunction with output-based assessment and standards that will dovetail into a national qualifications framework. The different stages of the project involve:

- developing educational curricula, with an emphasis on teaching methods and innovations in training;
- developing of standards and procedures for assessment in line with EU standards;
- the training of trainers;
- developing a system of career guidance for students and trainees;
- developing innovation in vocational education and training policy and upgrading the legal framework, including the drafting and adoption of the Vocational Education and Training Act;
- upgrading the vocational education and training management system; and
- providing materials and equipment for teaching and learning.

A career path for vocational teachers

The aim is to develop a new model for the development and upgrading of teachers' qualifications. The following steps have been taken to implement this idea:

- the establishing of unified standards for job descriptions;
- the establishment of indicators to assess the quality of teaching;

- the introduction of new methods and incentives for teachers;
- the establishment of three pilot centres for teacher training in vocational training and the procuring of modern equipment for them; and
- the implementation of the cascade method in teacher training.

Foreign language training in vocational schools

The aim here is to develop educational curricula and learning materials for foreign language training in the vocational education and training system. The project involves the following elements:

- creating and equipping three regional centres to provide training in foreign languages for special purposes;
- delivering language teacher training; and
- drafting the legislative framework for the operation of the new centres.

Financial management of secondary education

The objectives of the project are:

- to introduce a more flexible, decentralised form of financial management of secondary education so as to ensure the increased financial independence of schools;
- to develop an information management system (software) to support the financial and accounting departments in schools; and
- to establish an Initiative Fund which would stimulate schools to take on decentralised responsibilities.

Development and management of science and technologies

The objectives of the project are:

- to develop a national policy in the field of science and technology, which would ensure constant close links between the needs of private companies and the economy a whole; and
- to establish a National Technological Centre and a Technical Unit for the dissemination of information.

National Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation

The objectives of the project are to:

- evaluate the experience of the Agency;
- to provide staff training and allow staff to operate as trainers and moderators; and
- to finalise the database for accreditation.

School for Everyone

The objectives of the project are:

- to develop a system for monitoring, training and promoting the social integration of school dropouts;

- to develop teaching/learning models with a practical orientation for use with school dropouts; and
- to establish a Resource Centres for teachers and Centres for Dialogue between the providers and consumers of education in various regions in the country.

8.1.2 The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy runs the following projects in vocational education and training.

Labour Market and Social Policy Project

Component 1: Social reaction to the consequences of structural reform – job creation

The aim of this project is to provide assistance for the development and implementation of appropriate social policy reactions to the consequences of structural reforms by implementing job creation programmes and expanding programmes for additional vocational training.

Labour Market Development Programme

Component 3: Technical services for the development of local strategies for economic and employment growth in Bulgaria

The general objective of this component is "to promote, through increased dialogue and co-operation at local/regional level, the development of local solutions to the problems of unemployment and industrial restructuring". This objective should be achieved by a pilot project, implemented in Sofia and Montana, focused on the provision of a network of information points and training facilities, as well as initial capital assistance to support employment creation opportunities for self-employed individuals or micro-enterprises.

8.1.3 The Ministry of Trade and Tourism

Bulgaria Tourism Development Programme

The Programme includes three projects which have training components:

- *Institutional Strengthening and Enterprise Development;*
- *Promotion and Marketing;* and
- *Manpower Development.*

Training seminars, study visits and equipment have been provided under the programme.

8.1.4 The Ministry of Culture

Cultural Development Programme

The Programme comprises four components:

- *Development of Policy and Legislation in Culture;*
- *Establishment of an EU-Bulgarian Cultural and Book Centre;*

- *Art Administration and Management training;* and
- *an Art Development Fund.*

Training seminars, workshops and different training courses for representatives of cultural institutions, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Culture, have been provided under the programme. One of the main objectives is for training to be included for as many representatives of institutions in the culture sphere as possible. The UK's British Council is delivering the technical assistance for the programme.

8.2 *World Bank project*

Human Resources Development - Training and Retraining

The project has three strands.

Strand 1

Project management training for Ministry of Labour and Social Policy staff, especially in preparing calls to tenders and selecting training organisations offering training and retraining programmes

Strand 2

Methodological assistance for staff expansion and the implementation of standards for new qualifications and vocational training

Strand 3

Development of a methodology for training and retraining the following target groups - young people, the long-term unemployed and the disabled - and for the training of trainers to train and retrain these groups.

8.3 *UN projects*

Business Training in Secondary Schools

The main objective of the project is the elaboration of a curriculum for teaching economics in secondary comprehensive schools. This will enhance entrepreneurial development in young people and prepare them for new labour market demands.

Beautiful Sofia and Beautiful Bulgaria

The emphasis in these projects is on the training and retraining of the unemployed and the provision of temporary employment.

8.4 Bilateral projects

8.4.1 The Ministry for Education and Science

- The following projects are being implementing in partnership with **Austria**.
  - *Curriculum development and learning materials for five secondary vocational schools in the field of economics.*
  - *Tourism Management – training of pupils to acquire the qualification of 'European tourism manager'.*

    Training tourist agencies will be established and equipped for the practical training of pupils.
- The following projects are being implementing in partnership with **Germany**:
  - *Establishment of three training centres for the training and retraining of teachers and students in about 20 occupations.*

    The modular curricula designed in the context of the Phare UVET project will be implemented in these centres for post-secondary training from 1998/1999. Training will last from 1-2.5 years.
  - *Introducing a new 'installation technician' qualification in the areas of air conditioning, gas and systems sewerage.*

    One pilot school has been equipped and the curriculum has been piloted for two years.
  - *Training in economics in vocational schools which do not specialise in this area.*

    Five pilot schools have been established. Curricula and learning materials have been developed.
  - *A new list of occupations* and a legislative framework for vocational education and training have been developed and will be piloted for two years, starting with the 1997/98 school year. Twenty-one vocational standards have been developed.
  - *An interdisciplinary centre for vocational education and training has been established in Plovdiv, specifically for bakers and pastry makers.*
  - *Training courses in welding have been implemented during the past 2 years both for trainers and trainees in accordance with the Harmonised European System for Welding.*
  - *A pre-selection project for training to set up small and medium-sized companies.*

    The training is being delivered in Germany.
  - *Training in the field of banking at secondary, post-secondary and university levels.*

    The project is at the drafting stage.
- The following projects are being implementing in partnership with **Denmark**.
  - *Training in economics and marketing in eleven secondary vocational schools.*

    Curricula have been developed and implemented. A certificate for graduates has been agreed by the Bulgarian and Danish partners and would be signed by both of them.
  - *Management of Sport Activities.*

    This project started in 1998 and curricula for post-secondary training have been developed.

8.4.2 The Ministry for Labour and Social Policy

The Ministry is involved in projects, together with **Germany** and **Greece**, based on bilateral agreements for workforce exchange.

8.4.3 National Employment Service

- *A Quick Start Programme implemented with the help of the* ***American*** *State Department of Labour and the American Agency for International Development.*
  The objective of such programmes is the vocational training of workers for certain workplaces. This is based on analyses of work and specific tasks based on real employer demands. The programme includes the work placement of successful graduates. The pilot phase of the programme includes training workers for selected enterprises in three different regions in Bulgaria. The project is being piloted in the districts of Varna, Bourgas and Russe.
- *Development of a system of career guidance for young people and adults in Bulgaria.*
  This project was implemented with financial assistance from **Germany**.
  - five vocational information centres have been established and are up and running;
  - 367 information files on different occupations were developed;
  - 98 video films on different occupations were produced; and
  - 78 multimedia products were developed.

8.5 The Leonardo da Vinci Programme

Preparations for the Leonardo da Vinci Programme were finalised by mid-1999. A National Co-ordination Unit was established in a protocol, signed by the Minister of Education and Science and the Head of the National Employment Service on 5 March 1998. The National Co-ordination Unit worked on final preparations for the programme in close co-operation with Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the National Employment Service.

Several months after it was launched, the National Co-ordination Unit set up five Regional Offices in the towns of Pleven, Russe, Varna, Plovdiv and Burgas. The National Co-ordination Unit chose different host institutions involved in vocational education and training sector. Work on the establishment of a National Resource Centre for Vocational Guidance began in September 1998. The Centre is part of a European network supported by the Leonardo programme.

The National Co-ordination Unit held a national conference and five regional conferences on the topic of vocational guidance and counselling. Reports, discussions and conclusions of the conferences were published and widely disseminated.

Two training events for future promoters were organised. Trainers from the previous Technical Assistance Office, as well as successful promoters from Finland, Portugal and Hungary, participated in these events.

A total of 35 presentations were made at appropriate events and information on vocational guidance was published in national and regional newsletters, brochures etc. A total of 25 future promoters, supported by the European Training Foundation took part in the 1999 information days in Brussels. The National Co-ordination Unit, with support from the European Commission (DG XXII) and the UK National Co-ordination Unit, organised training for evaluators.

Over 600 participants took part in events organised by the Bulgarian National Co-ordination Unit. The Unit has also set up an address database with details on Bulgarian and foreign institutions to support the activities of promoters.

The European Parliament voted to accept Bulgaria as a full member of the programme on 10 February 1999 and Bulgaria formally became a fully-fledged member on 1 April 1999. A conference was organised on 31 May 1999 to demonstrate Bulgaria's commitment to joining European initiatives in the field of education and training on one hand, and on the other, to acknowledge the co-operation and support of the European Commission.

In the first call for proposals under the programme, 80 Bulgarian proposals were submitted. Nine will be supported by the European Commission and 7 placements were agreed to. Twenty-two partnership arrangements with Bulgarian participation were finalised, as were 10 placements with Bulgarian partners. All in all, 48 Bulgarian institutions will be involved in Leonardo projects, which is a considerable achievement and highly beneficial to Bulgaria.

It is anticipated that Bulgarian participation in the second phase of the programme will add to the process of integration into the European Union.

8.6 *The Special Preparatory Programme for the European Social Fund*

The National Resource Centre for the preparation of Bulgaria's future participation in the European Social Fund was established as an organisational unit in the Human Resource Development Centre following an Agreement (No 226 of 28.07.99) between the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

The main objective of the Resource Centre is to implement a range of activities under the Special Preparatory Programme to prepare Bulgaria for participation in the European Social Fund, which is part of the Structural Funds of the European Union.

Among the main objectives of the National Resource Centre are :

- raising awareness of the Structural Funds and, particularly, the European Social Fund;
- providing assistance to Bulgarian projects applying for support from the European Social Fund;
- providing assistance to Bulgarian participants in the establishment of transnational partnerships to implement projects in the framework of European Social Fund;
- maintaining close co-operation with the European Commission, the European Training Foundation in Turin, national authorities and interested institutions so as to ensure successful Bulgarian participation in the European Social Fund;
- gathering, analysing and disseminating information on Bulgarian participation in the European Social Fund; and
- taking on organisational responsibility for the preparation of training seminars under the Special Preparatory Programme for the European Social Fund.

8.6.1 *Activities carried out by the Centre in 1999*

- Co-operation with the Bulgarian National Observatory and the European Training Foundation and the European Commission in the organisation of the first Introductory Seminar on the Special Preparatory Programme for Participation in the Structural Funds (15-16 January 1999).

- Collection and analysis of information from study visits of the Bulgarian group of experts examining the experience of the EU Member States in the planning and utilisation of European Social Funds.
- Organisation of a National Workshop to familiarise Bulgarian institutions with the basic operating principles of the Special Preparatory Programme for Participation in the Structural Funds (2 September 1999, Sofia).
- Preparation and dissemination of an information brochure on the Structural Funds.
- Organisation of a Supplementary Seminar followed by a Conference under the auspices of the Special Preparatory Programme (1-3 October 1999), with the participation by experts from the European Commission and the European Training Foundation.
- Organisation of two local seminars under the same programme (17-18 November 1999, Central-southern Region, and February 2000, North-western Region).

9. Constraints, challenges and further needs

Despite the active policy pursued in the field of vocational education and training, a number of constraints and challenges have to be overcome.

- ***The initial vocational education and training system still does not meet the demands of the newly emerging market economy. It remains primarily school-based and theoretical in orientation. In the absence of an operating apprenticeship or on-the job training scheme, practical training takes place in schools which are often insufficiently and/or inappropriately equipped to meet this task.***
- The new Vocational Education and Training Act, adopted in 1999, is a significant step towards reforming vocational education and training. ***The two most critical issues in its implementation are: the financial constraints imposed by the Currency Board; and the capacity of institutions, particularly at the regional, municipal and local levels to deliver the required level of service.***
- The Vocational Education and Training Act makes provision for de-centralising the administration and management of the system to regional, municipal and school levels thus giving school directors responsibility for administrative and financial management. ***Further capacity building will be required at the regional, municipal and school levels to ensure the successful implementation of agreed policy. The Regional Inspectorates will require further training following their re-organisation.***
- ***There is a mismatch between the knowledge and skills acquired by graduates of general secondary schools, which are predominantly academic, and labour market needs. There are no specific measures for early school leavers who leave the education system with no or very low qualifications, or for those who complete general secondary education with qualifications that are inappropriate for the needs of the labour market.*** Both groups are very vulnerable to unemployment. ***This underlines the increased need for continuing training in order to integrate young unemployed school leavers into the workforce.***
- New institutions in the vocational education and training system have been established. These include the Centres for Vocational Training and Vocational Guidance and Information, working in the field of continuing vocational training, centres for the training of trainers and the Centre for Vocational Education and Training and Vocational Guidance. ***Due to insufficient finances (for new premises, refurbishment, rent etc.) the network of information/advisory units is not yet sufficiently developed. The number of the experts engaged in vocational guidance and counselling is low. No specialised staff training is provided.***
- The Vocational Education and Training Act makes provision for monitoring the quality of continuing vocational training. ***However, there is an urgent need to improve the level of workforce participation in continuing training through developing support mechanisms to encourage enterprises to invest in training.***

- There is recent evidence that co-operation between the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has been strengthened at the policy-making level. The two ministries have signed a co-operation agreement in the area of employment policy and training, which has resulted in their effective collaboration in the drafting the Vocational Education and Training Act and in the implementation of the Special Preparatory Programme for the European Social Fund and the Phare VETERST Programme (Vocational education, science and technology reform).
- ***The financing of initial and continuing vocational education and training must be viewed as being insufficient (average expenditure is lower than most candidate countries). There is no indication that the state budget will be increased in the future.***
- ***There is no regular flow of information on, and analysis of, skill requirements either in the public and the private sectors and there is little capacity at present to provide this information.*** The VETERST pilot schools have involved local employers in agreeing on the definition of needs and occupational profiles, but this is not common practice in other schools.
- ***Transparent occupational standards, which could be used to determine the content of syllabuses and curricula, the educational materials and technical facilities required, proper teacher training programmes and uniform assessment systems and entry standards for students, are not yet in place in the vocational education and training system.*** However, the Vocational Education and Training Act makes provision for a National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, based on the tripartite principle, which will assume these responsibilities. ***The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training will require further financial and technical support.***
- ***The retraining of the unemployed is restricted to those who have a confirmed job offer.*** In areas of high unemployment, i.e., in those regions in which heavy industry is being privatised and/or restructured, this restriction has an adverse impact on continuing training.
- ***There are insufficient incentives to encourage employers or employees to take up training opportunities.***
- The social dialogue on economic and social issues is currently conducted at the national level in the National Council for Tripartite Co-operation. ***However, the social partners, at both national and regional level have shown greater interest in wage negotiations and conditions of employment than in training. Although the legal framework for vocational education and training is in place, no comprehensive social dialogue has yet taken place.***

9.1 *Key priority areas for future assistance*

The following are the key priorities for future assistance:

- dissemination of the VETERST pilot school activities and the further upgrading of the quality of initial vocational training by providing support targeted, in particular, at the development of new training standards based on occupational requirements and a new assessment/certification system;
- institutional building and the development of vocational education and training at regional level, including the development of a framework for dialogue with the social partners; and
- development of continuing training activities as an integral part of active labour market measures for population groups which are vulnerable to unemployment and social exclusion.

List of abbreviations

AP	Agency for Privatisation
BIA	Bulgarian Industrial Association
BNO	Bulgarian National Observatory
CEEC	Central and Eastern European Countries
CITU	Confederation of the Independent Trade Unions
CSB	Consolidated State Budget
CVG	Centre for Vocational Guidance
CVT	Continuing Vocational Training
ESF	European Social Fund
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HEA	Higher Education Act
HIA	Health Insurance Act
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
LCS	Law for the Civil Servants
LFACB	Law on Family Aid and Children's Benefits
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LLSGEMS	Law on the Level of Schooling, the General Educational Minimum and the Syllabus
LO	Labour Office
LPRSIPD	Law on Protection, Rehabilitation and Social Integration of the Physically Disabled
LSA	Law for State Administration
MC	Municipal Council
MC	Ministry of Culture
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MF	Ministry of Finance
MH	Ministry of Health

MI	Ministry of Industry
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
NCO	National Classification of Occupation
NCTPC	National Council for Three-Partite Co-operation
NCVQ	National Council for Vocational Qualification
NE&AA	National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency
NES	National Employment Service
NSI	National Statistical Institute
NVETA	National VET Agency
RES	Regional Employment Service
PEA	Public Education Act
PQUF	Professional Qualification and Unemployment Fund
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SPP	Special Preparatory Programme
UPEIA	Unemployment Protection and Employment Incentives Act
UVET	Upgrading Vocational Education and Training
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VETA	VET Act
VIC	Vocational Information Centre
VS	Vocational schools

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Glossary of terms

Terms in the field of VET

According to the Vocational Education and Training Act – 1999

1. **Vocational training** – system which ensure the acquisition of qualification for a vocation or part thereof, as well as the upgrading of that qualification.
2. **Initial vocational training** – acquisition of initial qualification in a vocation or part thereof.
3. **Continuing vocational training** – improvement of competencies acquired in a vocation or part thereof.
4. **Vocational education** – system which ensure the acquisition of the general education minimum valid for secondary education and the acquisition of qualification in a vocation.
5. **"Occupational area"** is a cluster of vocations in a sector of the economy defined in the National Classification of Sectors or in another sector of public life conforming to the respective area of education in line with the International Standard Classification of Education.
6. **"Vocation"** is a type of working activity for which vocational education and vocational training is organised.
7. **"Part of a vocation"** is a specified working activity within a vocation for which training can be organised.
8. **"Specialty"** is an individually specified working activity within a certain vocation.
9. **"Vocational qualification"** is qualification in a vocation or part of a vocation which combines a set of vocational competencies and the general education knowledge and skills that are needed to acquire them.
10. **"Vocational competencies"** are abilities that the person has acquired on the basis of the accumulated knowledge and skills that help come up with initiatives, be fit for teamwork and competently to exercise a vocation in line with the State education requirements for acquiring qualification in a vocation.
11. **"Level of vocational qualification"** is the scope and content of vocational competencies and the general education knowledge and skills that are needed to acquire them.
12. **"Deviant behaviour"** is behaviour that violates public norms and is subject to moral censure and legal sanction.
13. **"Accreditation"** is the recognition of the compliance of the activity and quality of career guidance and vocational training and education with the State education requirements.
14. **"Competence"** is the recognised possession of the compulsory amount of vocational competencies that qualify to practice specific jobs.

According to the Higher Education Act

1. **Institutional accreditation** means establishment the correspondence between the structure and overall activity of the higher school and its units.

According to the Law on the Level of Schooling, the General Educational Minimum and the Syllabus

1. **Level of schooling** means the acquisition of the necessary volume of learning, as well as consistency in and continuity of education.
2. The **general educational minimum** means the acquisition of compulsory knowledge and skills needed for the successful performance of schoolchildren for the secondary education.
3. **Elective instruction** means provision of additional training within the framework of subjects belonging to the fields of education and culture and corresponding to the interest s and aptitudes of schoolchildren.
4. **Optional instruction** means provision of training in fields and activities suggested by the school and chosen by the schoolchildren. The former may not belong to the fields of education and culture.

Terms in the field of labour market

1. **Employed people** – persons of 15 years of age and over who during the reference period:
   - performed some work for at least one hour for pay in cash or in kind or other income;
   - did not work but had a job or enterprise from which they were temporary absent du to leave, illness, full-paid maternity leave, bad weather or other reason.

   As employed are considered persons who are in paid employment; persons working without pay in enterprise owned by relative person of the same household.
2. **Unemployed people** – persons of 15 years of age and over who did not work at all during the reference period were actively searching job with the preceding four weeks and were available to start work within a defined short period of time.

   Considered as unemployed are persons who were not actively looking for work but:
   - expect to start new job or business within 30 days or
   - expect to return to their former job from which they are dismissed or on unpaid leave /over a month/, provided they have employer's promise and agreed data of return to work.

   Students, homemakers, pensioners and other persons who are usually not economically active are considered as unemployed during the reference period of they meet the above definition of unemployment.

Major organisations in vocational education and training and continuing vocational training

Ministry of Education and Science
2 A, Dondukov Blvd.
Sofia 1000
Bulgaria
Tel.: (++359 2) 84 81

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
2, Triaditza St.
Sofia 1040
Bulgaria
Tel.: (++359 2) 91 408

National Employment Service
3, Dondukov St.
Sofia 1000
Bulgaria
Tel.: (++359 2) 91 408

Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria
1, Makedonia Sq.
Sofia 1040
Bulgaria
Tel.: (++359 2) 86 61

Confederation of Labour "Podkrepa"
2, Angek Kanchev St.
Sofia 1000
Bulgaria
Tel.: (++359 2) 989 30 33

Bulgarian Industrial Association
16-20, Alabin St.
Sofia 1000
Bulgaria
Tel.: (++359 2) 980 99 16; 987 29 60
Fax: (++359 2) 987 26 04
Homepage: http://www.bia-bg.com

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Institute of Economics
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Fax: (++359 2) 88 21 08

National Statistical Institute
2, P. Volov St.
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List of in-depth studies, carried out by the Bulgarian National Observatory

- **Post-secondary vocational education in Bulgaria (1997).**
- **The role of social partners in VET development in R. Bulgaria (1997).** The main conclusions and recommendations defined by the study are as follows:
    - Despite the crucial significance of vocational education and training for both job creation and structural adjustment, the social partners have never put this problem up for discussion in its own right but have considered it only incidentally or within the context of the employment bill. It would be appropriate ***to form specialised VET sub-committees with the individual commissions, councils, etc.***, which should guarantee separate consideration of the problem with a view to diagnosing the actual state of affairs and looking for solutions on the policy, organisation and financing of vocational training, geared to the specific conditions of specific levels and structures.
    - ***The forms of social partnership in vocational training need development and diversification***, and ***the co-operation of non-governmental organisations should be enlisted to this end***. As soon as possible, the social partners should reach a specific agreement on vocational training.
    - ***The collective agreement should become a realistic and mandatorily observed document in enterprises.***
    - ***The interaction between VET and the labour market should be enhanced by promoting the principle of bipartism,*** and/or the needs of human resource development at the enterprise level.
    - Clearly, while the tripartite partnership bodies pay attention to the training of the unemployed, they totally ignore another need, to help industry improve its productivity. ***In conditions of a labour surplus, training for entrepreneurship and self-employment is of crucial importance.*** The proper balance should be achieved through interaction between social partners, provided they have adequate experience to promote such policies. Hence the need of intensive training of social partner representatives, and especially of those representing employers' organisations.
    - ***Interaction between the social partners needs overall improvement at all levels***, with particular focus on local (regional, municipal etc.) bodies of social partnership, which should strengthen the practical solutions geared to the specific demand of the local labour market. Contacts between the labour offices, the existing training centres and local businesses also provide a dynamic source of information about labour demand.
    - Another significant problem is ***to involve the emerging institutions at various levels and sectors into the whole cycle of training, its forms and stages*** (occupational guidance, education and training, and post-training observation).
    - Insofar as there is a clearly articulated idea to abandon adult vocational training, ***social partners should pool their efforts for encouragement of vocational training of manpower in the direction of enhancing of skills and skill flexibility.*** The enterprise, the government and the separate interest groups have common priorities in these spheres, and a consensus on the development of VET would therefore be the easiest to reach.

- The social partners have yet to identify their VET policy priorities. ***There is urgent need to sign a national agreement between the social partners*** which should cover: the relationship between training and working life (focusing on enterprises); intensification of continuing and further education; involvement of social partners in elaborating, modifying, implementing and evaluating training policies; entry of disadvantaged groups in the labour market; promotion of research and systematisation of employment and training statistics and analysis. To this end, however, ***massive training of the participants in the social dialogue system themselves will be needed***.
- ***Development and adaptation of the legal framework*** and implementation of a policy encouraging and servicing economic restructuring, the improvement of the quality of the labour force, the flexibility of the labour market and, ultimately, the creation of new productive jobs. The representatives of the social partners should initiate the drafting of a Vocational Training Act, harmonised with the appropriate part of Community law, and have it passed by the legislature.
- The social partners' lack of sufficient reciprocal information about what is being done by the individual institutions blocks the progress of the entire process. Concentrating on separate ad hoc problems of political nature prevents the elaboration of an appropriate VET strategy, which should be followed and applied step by step at all levels.
- ***It would be recommendable that the Supervisory Board of the National Employment Service integrate and prioritise policies in this area.*** Thus, the establishment of an Accreditation Agency for Vocational Education and Training, the distribution of vocational training contributions in the Fund and all other retirement and health insurance contributions, the administrative and information support of the system, the improvement of the efficiency of training and its adaptability to skill needs and other important issues of this order should be included on the agenda of the Supervisory Board of the NES and of the National Council for Tripartite Co-operation and other bodies at national level.
- The long-term success of the training schemes depends on how far policy-makers and the social partners involved are taking on board and considering the principle of administrative subsidiarity.

One way to contain the erosion or outright lack of enterprise-based training is ***to promote community-based training through establishment of local partnerships, encouraged by the joint efforts of regional tripartite councils with the assistance of the municipalities and business support centres***. The establishment of local management development institutions and training centres will also be of crucial significance in reshaping training policies and programmes.

- **Continuing vocational training in Bulgaria. (1998)** The major conclusions defined by the study are as follows:
  - Within the current environment the role and the significance of the CVT are a key social, economic and political factor. The CVT will play a key role for the successful finalisation of the Bulgaria's transition to market economy and its application fir EU membership. The dynamic of the needs and the requirements for the restructuring of both economy and labour market can be met with the vocational training of the active people – i.e. ***the development of the CVT is a necessary issue.***
  - The education both in the state and the private enterprises is undergoing a process of stagnation. This stagnation is due to the lack of funds and to the insufficient evaluation (on behalf of the employers) of the importance of the training for the development of production, for the preservation of the existing positions and for the opening of new ones, for the improvement of quality, competitiveness and of some other necessary for the business effects.

In this respect ***the training in and for the enterprises is necessary to be stimulated through special measures and programmes.***

- The CVT state is unsatisfied and it is needed for reforms. There are numerous unsolved issues – legal framework, institutional and organisational framework and interrelations, quality of training, etc.
  - The country lacks a comprehensive, active and purposeful state, regional and company policy for the development of CVT. ***A conception for the development of CVT should be elaborated*** in order to overcome the existing situation.
  - ***A law for CVT*** clarifying the objects, the subjects, the functions, the rights and the obligations of all the participants in the process and regulations definite rules for its organisation and implementation ***should be elaborated***.
  - The need for the development of an institutional framework of the CVT, its broadening and decentralisation as well as for the upgrading of the structure and links of the system, for the co-operation between the institutions is clearly outlined.
  - The quality of a significant part of the performed training is insufficient. This statement can be applied both to the teaching documentation (the curricula, in particular) and to the immediate organisation of the process of education and training (methods, duration, teaching skills, organisation of the process, etc.). ***A system for investigation of the needs for training, of the production requirements and of the labour market should be established.*** This system should help the innovation of new curricula and the improvement of the quality of the training of adults (CVT). ***An effective system for control on the implementation of CVT should be developed*** on the basis of the new standards. It will allow for an immediate feedback and influence.
- The science and the research within the frame of CVT are limited and do not correspond to the requirements. ***Research teams and more projects are needed.***
- ***A comprehensive system for training of trainers is necessary to be established*** (training of managerial staff and experts on all levels of CVT).

■ **Teacher/trainer training in vocational education and training system in Bulgaria (1998).** The major conclusions defined by the study are:

- The system of teacher training and qualification is still centralised. The poor teacher rewards and the lack of vocational criteria when staff cuts are made, act against the teachers motivation to improve themselves as professionals.
- Teacher training and qualification have a worthy place within the international projects related to VET. But they are not priorities subject to public discussions on the education reform. The issues of teacher training and qualification are discussed by the peers (mostly the special one) and in pedagogical journals as part of the common discussions on education or in relation to new legislative changes.
- The fundaments of a new modern strategy to teachers' training and upgrading of the qualifications for the purposes of the VET system should be searched within:
  - teacher profession specifics and changes before it in the conditions of transition to free market and democratic society;
  - Bulgarian Vocational Schools and VET system needs;
  - changing attitudes and motivation of practising teachers towards learning, according to the tendency foe lifelong learning;

- taking into account the labour market demands and requirements of the human resource development;
- strengthen the partnership with the employers – take into account their demands, needs and expectations about the levels of knowledge and skills of the labour force; making them real school partners (including Higher Education Institutions) and of teachers (including University/College teachers) in planning and realisation of the teaching/learning/education process' aims, objectives and organisation;
- providing about the training and qualification system in respect of the demand, needs and consumers of educational services, the opportunities for satisfying educational needs of as well as access, flexibility, and opportunities of the system, changes in the legal base and conditions for effective educational activity;
- upgrading the quality of education and vocational qualification of the teachers working in VET system towards European and World standards.

- Survey on the training needs in the region of Stara Zagora (1998)

Economic development of the Region of Stara Zagora during the last decade faced a number of problems – decrease of importance of the main sectors in the regional economy like energethics and heavy industry, forthcoming redundancy of highly qualified staff from these sectors, insufficient foreign investments, etc.

For the region of Stara Zagora the most striking data is that the employed in the private sector is fairly lower than the average for the country. Meanwhile the main employers – the large heavy industry enterprises, will be privatised, restructured or liquidated.

It could be expected that the redundant labour force will not find vacancies in the area of its qualification. Since it is not realistic to suppose that new SMEs will emerge in the same sectors as a result of accumulated experience and entrepreneurial activity the structural unemployment of high qualified labour force might become a serious problem in the region. The existing companies will not absorb the job-seekers. Privatisation will not create new jobs as well. In this respect – the role of the tri-partite councils with the active participation of the labour offices and the National Labour Service should start developing specific programmes for re-qualification and alternative employment.

The Region of Stara Zagora lacks a strategy for vocational development of labour force. This makes the question of preferred form and duration of training rather difficult for managers.

Yet most of those who answered it seem to opt for short-term training targeted at the needs of the particular work-place (48%). It might be that such a form of training is considered to be linked to a faster recovery of expenses and fewer hours taken off work. Most interviewees find vocational schools training relatively adequate to their needs (63%). The main area of discontent has to do with the lack of practical skills given to future workers and personnel (66%).

Employers do not use sufficiently the available opportunities to influence education and vocational training policy. Only 6% of the interviewed companies are members of school boards. The services provided by the business centre or the branch chamber in the respective town are hardly used (4% and 14% respectively).

The activities for improvement of the education and vocational training should focus on the increasing the role of modern methods of agriculture, ecology, high technologies, etc.

Education and vocational training might pay attention to the problems of modern education of the labour force in the field of trade and construction as their role in the regional private sector is increasing

The system of education and vocational training have to respond to the real economic problems and economic and social development trends such as:

- Emerging of small private companies as a result of the restructuring of traditional regional sectors – heavy industry, machine-building, chemical industry, electronics;
- Necessity of the creation of techno-parks, business-centres and business incubators;
- Increase of the importance of self-employment, especially among persons with higher education;
- More efficient use of Labour Offices and their function of labour intermediaries;
- Increase of the demand of employees with general functional skills – accountants, computers experts, advertising/marketing experts.

One of the survey's results was the development of a *Model for involving the social partners in the management of vocational education and training at a regional level – Council for partnership*. It is based on the achievement of consensus between social partners in respect with programmes for education and training and the priorities of each of the interested parties. The interested parties – the local administration, employers and consumers (beneficiaries) – have their priorities, which are not mutually exclusive:

- The priorities for the individual in the field of education and training are foremost connected with: a) getting a promotion; b) avoiding unemployment, c) flexibility and diversity of skills, and d) improving the efficiency of labour.
- The priorities for the enterprise are foremost connected with: a) improving the efficiency of labour, or applying new technological processes, or increasing the productivity while using the same technology; b) developing flexibility of skills and overcoming the lack of skills, c) promoting, and d) avoiding lay-offs.
- The priorities for the local administration are: a) to avoid unemployment; b) avoiding lack of skills in order to in responding the needs of the enterprises; c) efficiency of labour; d) supporting the professional career development.

- **Transparency and mutual recognition of qualifications (1998).** The major conclusions defined by the study are:
  - The lack of good connection between the lists of occupations and specialities, studied in the official education sector, and the ones in demand on the labour market. The private company training structures proved more flexible in this respect; they, however, do not always have the formal statute to issue documents and recognise qualifications.
  - The foreign language training is lagging behind in the vocational school while in those where it is introduced as a new element of the syllabus, its level, quality and instruction content need improvement.
  - The training of trainers is still only in the framework of the pilot projects. In its prevailing part in the updating of the training and improvement of teachers is left to themselves. Furthermore, one can say that their training under pilot programmes, and the one carried out by the formal educational institutions do not correspond.
  - May be the most vulnerable point in the lack of "school – enterprise" connection or "university-enterprise" connection. In this respect again the advantage is for the training structures outside the formal educational system – for example the employers' chambers and associations. In the system of vocational education, the good tradition in this respect is fading, because of the privatisation of some base enterprises and the closing of other, losing ones.

- The lack of autonomy and economic independence and of the educational institutions makes it difficult for their management to take decisions and blocks their initiative and possibility for innovation in the instruction process. Here, of course the tendencies are defined. The universities and higher schools, as well as the private educational structures, have grater independence and respectively better chances to adapt to the market conditions and survive.
- The lack of legislative regulation, envisaging specific procedures for national recognition of foreign qualification and experience in Bulgaria.

The success of the reform lies in the continuation of changes in the following directions:

- Development of the scope of the legislative framework for the vocational education and training and their recognition, as well as provision of financial support on the part of the Government:
  - Specifying in the functions of the respective institutions, involved in the process of vocational training and forming of coherent functional ties between them;
  - Opening the system of vocational education and training and greater elasticity in the process of certification (licensing, formation of a supra-departmental supervisory institution, quality assurance and efficiency of this process);
  - Introduction of terminological clarity and universality on the laws.
- Inclusion and active participation of the social partners in the management, organisation and supply of vocational education and training;
- Development of the system to determine the needs for training and especially the use of the assessment of the needs for training given by the employers' organisations concerning private companies and SMEs.
- Co-operation between the MES and the social partners aimed at developing a system for training of trainers (including the present programmes, developed by the social partners).
- Development of new conceptual programmes and approaches in the area of VET, including the development and implementation of in-company training, on-the job training and INTERNET as new means of training.
- Financial support on the part of the state is also needed concerning the training activities in the SMEs, through target courses, developed in accordance their needs.
- Phasing in of the adaptation of the vocational training system (formal and informal) to the European standards:
  - Balance of the transparency of the qualifications (in terms of expected results and possible risks for the work force, the employers and the economy);
  - Adoption of measures of protection of the national labour market, through endorsing national procedures for recognition of foreign qualification in Bulgaria, in case there are no bilateral agreements.
- Support on the part of the European Training Foundation for the introduction of the EU standards in the area of vocational education as well as support for EU programmes like Leonardo da Vinci.

The first steps in the reform have already been made:

- The dialogue with the social partners is opened and the vocational education and training system "is being opened" for their active participation in it – in terms of co-operation, requirements, training, etc.
- A first step is made towards creating a modern legislative base for the VET.

- The Vocational Education and Training Act which is undoubtedly a great achievement of the MES.
- On the MES initiative and with the co-operation of the social partners was created a Concept of Endorsing the National System for Vocational Education for Adults. The next stage is for it to become a national working programme.

■ **Regulated professions in Bulgaria (1998).** The study and analysis of the regulated professions in the Republic of Bulgaria gives grounds to come to the following conclusions:

- The majority of the professions in the list are taught in the formal education sector. The other institutions involved in the process have a supporting character. The authorised certificates are issued only by officially recognised vocational schools. This means that the Ministry of Education and Science has got a monopoly over the regulation of the professions and programs.
- The professions and programmes in the Register of secondary vocational education do not correspond to the performed structural changes and to the tendencies in the development of economy in the country independently of the partial changes during the recent years. The majority of them correspond to the old economic structure.
- The professions and programmes in the field of Health Care, Architecture and "Sea" entitling the graduate to the higher educational-qualification degrees – Master, Bachelor and Specialist in... – showed quick adaptability in terms of curricula, syllabi, profiles and types of training. In this sense their problem is not internal restructuring but transparency and recognition of the diplomas in accordance with the European requirements and legislation.
- The development of the legal framework of the educational system is retarded. The amendments to the Public Education Act, to the Higher Education Act, to the acts of secondary legislation, etc. as well as the Draft Vocational Education and Training Act do not correspond to the developing processes in the system of education. What is more, some of the texts are contradictory. This creates difficulties for the reform in the field of education in Bulgaria.
- The process of co-ordination of activities and of association of the social partners (especially of the employers) in the sphere of vocational education and training is in its initial phase.

The analysis shows that there exists a working, changing and regulated (from legal and administrative point of view) system of professions and programs corresponding, to a great extent, to the European standards. The future efforts should be directed at the following:

- Co-ordination of the activities of state institutions and social partners in the sphere of vocational education and training. Organised distribution of functions and obligations between the social partners and the state institutions in the establishment of a unified system for access to and practising of a profession.
- Adaptation of the profile of professions and programs with educational-qualification degrees "Technician" and "Specialist" to the requirements of the labour market in Bulgaria and in Europe. Compatibility of the syllabi depending on the conditions of the labour market in close to Bulgaria regions and in Europe as a whole. The idea of the above is to offer free movement of people.
- Application and improvement of the forms of distant learning as of the usage of Internet as a new educational technology.
- Assuring equal training for all and, especially, for the groups living in unequal social conditions.

- Creation of a state institution accountable to the Government for accreditation of the education institutions for vocational education and training similar to the one established for the evaluation and accreditation of higher education institutions.
- Development of a national program for continuous learning, for the practical implementation of the submitted to the Council of Ministers National Conception for Vocational Training of Adults. The above conception has to be realised through the licensing and control of the institution granting accreditation.
- Effective apprehension of the international programs and projects (multinational, bilateral, regional, etc.) in the sphere of vocational education, qualifications and re-qualification of the labour force.

▪ **VET research in Bulgaria (1999).** The implementation of the research outcomes in pilot schools and regions leads to good results in view of:

- Innovation of the school contents
- Introducing new techniques and using the modern training methods
- Establishing adaptive to labour market needs structures i.e. youth information labour offices, etc.
- Upgrading VET legislative structure, including opening the system for all key institutions.

Most projects shall be evaluated for the effectiveness of the conducted reform which will lead to their eventual multiplication in VET system. However it should not be forgotten, that the overall process requires significant financial resources.

The figure below shows in a synthesised form the main directions and the concrete outcomes from the implemented projects.

Direction	Outcomes
Structural reform	New list of the professions in VET and restructuring the VET system
Content changes	New curricula Modular training
Legal changes	VET Act
Technological changes	Upgrading vocational teachers training in vocational training and introducing modern methods of teaching
Technical changes	Modern equipment of pilot structures
Evaluation and accreditation	Development of quality standards and vocational training evaluation Establishment of a special institution for accreditation
Institutional changes	Widening of VET institutions

The research gaps are in the following fields of VET:

1. Lack of a close relation between labour market needs and the VET system restructuring.
2. Development of a system for training needs identification, and using the training needs assessment given by Employers' Associations regarding private companies and small and middle-sized enterprises.

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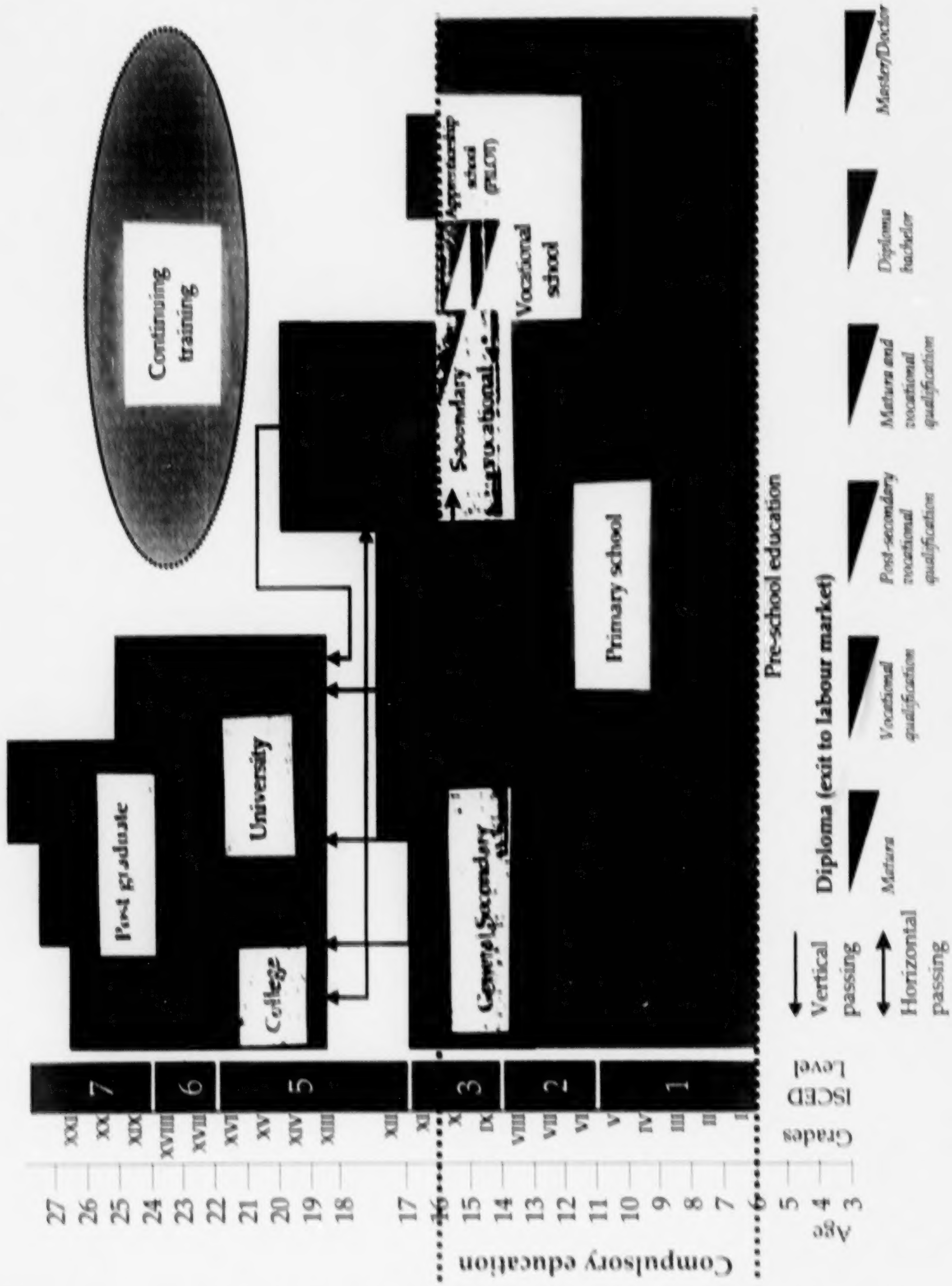
3. The trainer training system does not correspond to the VET changes. The relation between school-university and school/university – enterprise is not sufficiently developed.
4. In service training is incidental in nature. No in-depth studies have been carried out. It is necessary to develop new conceptual programmes and methods in the area of in-company training and on-the-job training.
5. Upgrading the financial organisation towards development of tax preferences, i.e.: tax preferences providing work places for the groups in an unequal status at the labour market; tax preferences for the companies, when investing in education and qualification.
6. Development of co-operation among institutions, offering VET and social partners, for their equivalent VET involvement.
7. Elaboration of a national concept for continuing vocational training.

- **Active Employment Measures and Human Resource Development: Training of Unemployed (1999).**
- **On-the job training and apprenticeship (1999).**

The Bulgarian education system


Post graduate
College
University
Continuing training
General Secondary
Secondary vocational
Vocational school
Apprenticeship school (PILOT)
Primary school
Pre-school education
Compulsory education
Age
Grades
ISCED Level
7
6
5
3
2
1
27 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3
XXI XX XIX XVIII XVII XVI XV XIV XIII XII XI X IX VIII VII VI V IV III II I
Vertical passing
Horizontal passing
Diploma (exit to labour market)
Matura
Vocational qualification
Post-secondary vocational qualification
Matura and vocational qualification
Diploma bachelor
Master/Doctor

This diagram represents the first stage in the ongoing development of a standard graphical model for vocational education and training systems. Future refinement may include the further alignment of terms, student enrolment and dropout figure, and local language terms.

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